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ROXOBEL.

VOLUME II.

Vol. 2.

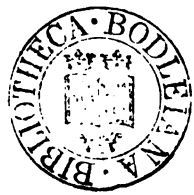
THE YEW-TREE SEAT.

ROXOBEL.

BY MRS. SHERWOOD,

AUTHOR OF

'LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BEARER," &c. &c.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ROXOBEL.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

examination of Mr. Airley's papers,
the date of the ball at Helmsley Hall
ven complete years had passed away,
ears that he had been so much en-
and interested by the various duties
he had taken upon himself, that he
t entered into a description either
es or of characters so minutely as
done on his first arrival at Roxobel.
g this period, according to the regu-
unt which this excellent man kept
me, he seems to have laid himself

out entirely for the good of his fellow-creatures, and especially for that of the rising generation. It also appears, from these papers, that he continued during the whole of this time, to be the tutor of Miss Lucy Lovel, and, in fact, to have entirely conducted her education; and, moreover, that he assisted in the education of the family at the parsonage. It is also evident, that his labours at the school had been unremitting, and that he had obtained the perfect love and confidence of many persons in the parish. Furthermore, it appears, that during this period no very important changes had taken place in the neighbourhood; and things were much as we left them at the Hall, excepting that time seemed to have done more than its usual work in hastening the progress of infirmity with the two younger Mistress Helmsleys, who seem not to have possessed any mental energy whereby to check the approach of that bodily weakness which always attends the advance of age in a greater or less degree.

Mrs. Winifred, though the eldest of the family, was still a hearty dame, having all

r faculties about her. The old servants re still at the Hall, and Mrs. Nuttall possed her usual influence. Mr. Jeffry Grifh was as jocose as ever, but was grown ry corpulent. Taffy, or, as Mr. Airley lls him in his latter papers, David Nutl, was lounging about the Hall, shoot-, hunting, fishing, riding what horses he ose, and expending a considerable quany of money, of which he seemed to pos-s a very great command, being apparently a situation as unfavourable to a young n as any which can possibly be conceived. . Barnaby Semple still attended at the ll, and was in high favour there; but he s suspected, it seems, of trifling with the ections of Miss Kitty Finchley, to whom had paid very particular attentions for eral years without coming to an explaion, a circumstance which we may supe to be the more mortifying, as Mr. ypole had been blessed with the hand Miss Betty, as is intimated in our mascript, very shortly after the memorable l at the mansion-house.

No change, it seems, had taken place at

CHAPTER II.

Dated in the summer of the year 1765.

We are this day expecting our dear young men from Oxford, for the long vacation. I have reason to think that this meeting will be an important one, as regards the future lives of four of the most lovely young people who ever met. I have a paternal affection for them all; I hardly can say who among them is most dear to me. When I would prefer my Lucy, then do all the perfections of my dovelike and interesting Sophia arise before me, as it were, to confute me; and when I think that Eugenius is my favourite, I am again equally perplexed, the image of my animated and candid Theodore seeming to present itself, to reproach me for my want of taste.

Well, be it so; I will love them all alike; I will make no comparisons; I will wrap them all in the inmost folds of my heart; and, when that heart is opened in secret prayer, I will not forget to mention the names of those beloved ones, who, for the last seven years, have been as sons and daughters to him, who was once a wanderer and stranger on the earth.

After writing the foregoing, I took my hat, and walked towards Dr. Beauchamp's. It not being the usual time for Mrs. Beauchamp to prepare her tea, I walked aside a little way into one of the cool and shadowy dingles behind the parsonage, and there sitting down upon a bench, placed beneath a spreading tree, I took out a book to beguile the passing hour. I knew that our dear youths were not expected until late in the evening, and yet I felt all that fidgetiness which ever attends the expected approach of those who have been gone time absent and are very much beloved.

Here, while I meditated on many things,

endeavouring to occupy myself with my book, while, at the same time, I found myself utterly unable to keep my attention to it, I heard a step, and looking up, saw the doctor approaching.

"The very man!" exclaimed the good father and friend, in his usual cheerful manner; but I thought there was a shade of thoughtfulness on his brow. "I have traced you hither," he continued, "because I want to open my heart; and long experience has taught me, that I can have no trial which is not shared by you."

I gave him my hand, but somehow, at that moment, I was unable to speak. He sat down by my side. He was silent an instant, and then said, "There is a friend that is nearer than a brother, and such a friend I have found," and he looked kindly on me. "How many times have I blessed God for that accident which brought you here! Our friendship has now served its apprenticeship: seven years and somewhat more have gone by since we first met—seven happy years—seven blessed years!

"'We were not nursed upon the selfsame hill,'

—and yet we may say, that we have, for the last week of years—

"'Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.'

Well, but I wanted to speak to you bout the nearest and dearest of our lock."

"Our four children?" I answered; "I hink I can anticipate all you have to ay."

"Perhaps not quite all," said the doctor, ith a half uttered sigh. "But no more reface: I see I make you uneasy. These oys and girls! Oh, I sometimes wish at they were as they were when we st met, Mr. Airley. The happiest part a man's life is when his children are tle. But have you not observed, yes, cannot have escaped you, that these ar young people are deeply attached each other?—Eugenius to Sophia, and eodore to Lucy? I saw it, Mr. Airley, Christmas: it has revealed itself more inly since by letters. And can you won- ? Such girls and such boys! Yet, per-

haps, I am partial. But if it depended on me, they should all be made happy, very happy, every one of them, and in their own way; yet here are difficulties, which you, perhaps, do not conceive."

"What," I asked, "from the Mistress Helmsleys?"

"These difficulties," replied the doctor, "may, perhaps, only exist in my apprehension. I only wish this," added the generous man, "that Eugenius had no pretensions to the great Helmsley estates; I don't covet their lands and their lordships. Eugenius has four thousand pounds from his father, and Lucy the same; and to be plain with you, I fear that I have scarcely, at this time, twice as many hundreds to give to my children, for I am not rich, Mr. Airley. But I have long been persuaded that riches can contribute but little to happiness; and in case of mine and their mother's death, they will have a decent competence, which will support them in their own rank: and my son must work in some way. But neither Sophia nor Theodore have any pretensions to a union with young people who

may divide between them these great estates. Perhaps you will say, that feeling this to be the case, I ought not to have suffered my children to have been so intimate with the young Lovels. I fear, indeed, that I have done wrong in allowing this; but the truth is, that I never reflected on the subject till the danger was at hand. So much for human wisdom, or human folly, or whatever else you may please to call my feeble apprehensions. But what, Mr. Airley, what are we to do now? If, when the young people meet again, we find that the regard between the parties is such as we have reason to apprehend, what, I ask, what ought we to do?"—and the good man looked at me with tears in his eyes; and I fully believed his assertion, when he assured me that he had never till lately considered the subject. Indeed, of all the men I ever met with in the course of my life, Dr. Beauchamp is the most simple, the most straight-forward, and attaches the lowest value to the mere outward circumstances of human grandeur; though I have seldom seen a man who possessed a higher relish for intellectual plea-

sures, and for those enjoyments which proceed from an exercise of the finer faculties of the mind and the charities of the heart.

But, though I gave the doctor full credit for his assertion, I could not persuade myself that Mrs. Winifred had lived till now, without apprehending that the intimacy between her own young people, and those at the parsonage, might, very probably, ripen into something of more importance, in reference to their future life. And I could not suppose, that she had been so blind to the extraordinary personal perfections of Sophia and Theodore, as not to be sensible that they were likely, each in their different ways, to attract the regards of her young relations. I therefore ventured to remark to the doctor, that I thought it probable that Mrs. Winifred might not have that objection to a connexion with the doctor's family which he anticipated. At the same time I expressed my desire that he would give me time to make my observations, before I gave him the advice which he required of me.

"Be it so," replied the doctor. "And now, my friend, I must unfold to you another subject of uneasiness, in the letter I received from my boys yesterday, announcing the time of their arrival. Theodore opened his mind to me on a subject which I now find has long been upon it. As you well know, I have always intended him for the church, and have educated him accordingly; but I find that his whole heart and soul is bent upon the army. Oh, Mr. Airley, this is a blow which I did not expect! I hope it may be a passing whim, and may soon be forgotten. But if it should be otherwise, how am I to part with my Theodore, my beautiful, my brave, my only son? I respect, I honour, a pious soldier; and I believe that a man may be as virtuous in the army as elsewhere: I have no prejudices of that sort. But to part with my only son, perhaps never to see him more——"

Here the poor father broke off, and was strongly affected; and I was unable to give him comfort, for I well knew the stubbornness in Theodore's character which renders it very difficult to turn him away

from any purpose once entertained by him. I, however, promised the good father all the assistance and comfort in my power; and was pleased to see that he presently seemed to recover his spirits, although his communications still rested heavily on my mind, and made me very unfit to sympathize in the happiness of Lucy and Sophia, both of whom came to meet us as we were returning through the shrubbery.

After partaking of the refreshment of tea, I proposed a walk to meet our young friends, the expected time of whose arrival was near at hand; and the ladies accordingly hastened to prepare themselves.

The sun had already dipped his golden disk beneath the horizon when we left the parsonage, and descended into the lower regions of the park towards the road. We had to pass several of those shadowy plantations which lie on the edge of the highway; and under one of these we rested awhile to listen to the song of the nightingale. We sat down on a rude seat fixed under the trees, close by the pathway which must be taken by the young gentlemen in proceed-

ing from the coach to the parsonage; and we were so near the turnpike-road that we could distinctly have heard the wheels of any carriage passing beneath the woods. We had not rested many minutes, when the sound of voices and steps approaching from the road met our attentive ears.

"It cannot be the boys," said the doctor, "or we should have heard the coach."

For an instant, however, we dared to hope; but the next moment we were all as it were repulsed by distinguishing the voice of David Nuttall, speaking to another person.

"I only wish that they had broken both their necks," were the first words which reached our ears.

The person addressed answered with an oath, reiterating the kind expression employed by David.

The next moment brought the two persons into full view. They were the beforementioned David Nuttall, fully accoutred for fishing, and with him Mr. Tolly, the miller.

me by sight. Well, but as you speak so pretty, I can't refuse to answer you, to be sure."

"Do not keep us in suspense, Mr. Nuttall," said the doctor. "You are torturing us. What has happened?" And we all gathered round him, entreating him to tell us what he had heard, our apprehensions being wrought up to the highest pitch, when suddenly our two beloved strangers appeared, advancing through the coppice in the direction of the road, and uttering exclamations of the most ardent delight at the unexpected sight of those whom they loved best of all on earth.

This was a moment in which all ideas of worldly policy were chased from the minds of the whole party. Sophia and Lucy, wholly regardless of the presence of David Nuttall and the miller, rushed into the arms of their brothers, and hung about their necks, bursting into tears, and using no reserve in explaining to them the reason of their extreme agitation.

"Mr. Nuttall," said Lucy, "had nearly frightened us to death. We really feared

be bullying your old acquaintance? If you have had a fall, have you not reason to be thankful that you are not hurt, and that no harm has been done?"

"Harm!" repeated Theodore, "when Miss Lovel and Sophia have been frightened to tears by that great blockhead."

"Will you have done, Theodore?" said Eugenius; and he muttered something about a blackguard, which, however, Master Taffy could not hear.

"Then," said the doctor, "we are to understand, my dear boys, that you have met with an accident, and that you have escaped without injury? Well, let us be thankful, and not behave ourselves like so many fighting-cocks."

The benevolent pastor then turned to Taffy, and, shaking hands with him, wished him a good evening, with a degree of kindness which did no small credit to his Christian charity: after which, giving himself up to unmingled joy, he embraced his boys, as he still called these University men, and desired to know the true history of the accident to the coach.

ters, were least likely to regard each other in any other point of view. But the event had turned out otherwise; and we had now nothing else but our own want of foresight to which to attribute the dilemma in which we found ourselves involved.

When arrived at the parsonage, we all sat down to the supper-table, and I was glad to perceive that the accident had not injured the appetites of the young travellers. Never do I remember to have seen a lovelier assemblage of brilliant human countenances than were then gathered around that table. The doctor, in the delightful interview with his assembled children, seemed to have forgotten all his anxieties. The good lady of the house looked calmly affectionate and benevolent. Eugenius, in the presence of his Sophia, seemed to possess all that was desirable on earth. And Lucy and Theodore were in such buoyant spirits, that it was impossible even to look at them without partaking of their gaiety.

At length, Theodore broke out into some strong expressions relative to some one who had offended him, and the doctor took oc-

encourage Theodore in a contemptuous spirit. It is that spirit which urges him to assume that sort of manner which leads to quarrels. These quarrels have hitherto indeed been harmless in their consequences; but does it follow that they will always remain so? How many a fine youth, in ancient and in modern times, has fallen a sacrifice to the effects of this false and unchristianlike spirit! And what would be your reflections, my beloved one, if hereafter any thing unpleasant should arise, in consequence of your unthinking encouragement of this hectoring temper which I so greatly condemn in my son? And, with respect to David Nuttall, I blame all here present, I mean you young people, with the exception, perhaps, of my Sophia. You have all, for years past, cherished an unkind feeling towards the poor youth, who is, undoubtedly, rather an object of compassion. Disreputable as his character certainly is, I scarcely know the boy who, in his situation, would have conducted himself better than he has done. And I dare say, you will agree with me,

"My sweet Lucy," said the doctor, "I did not mean to grieve you; but let me entreat you to encourage charitable feelings towards your fellow-creatures, not only in your own heart, but in the hearts of your associates: for the progress of hatred, from its commencement in contempt and ridicule, to its consummation in murderous purposes, or acts, is much more rapid than is sometimes imagined. But wipe away those tears, my lovely daughter, and recal the smiles I so much love to see;"—and so saying, he extended his kind hand to her, which she receiving, kissed with warmth, saying, "Dear papa, you have convinced me that I have been wrong about David Nuttall. I will endeavour never to speak of him again but with kindness; and we will not ridicule him any more."

"Then I, for one, must never mention his name," added Theodore, rather hotly.

"Well," observed the doctor, "that is the best thing you can do at present. I always think it a good rule never to allow myself to speak of a person whom I do not like. By observing this rule, I have often

the top of the coach this afternoon, has affected your brain."

"No, Sir," rejoined Theodore; "but I don't like Lucy to speak well of David Nuttall: he is such a wonderful favourite at the Hall, that I shall next expect to hear that Mrs. Winifred has chosen her niece for his wife."

"I should not wonder," cried Lucy, laughing. "Well, Theodore, you shall come to the wedding, and have a pair of white gloves."

"This is not the way to make me like this Taffy," replied Theodore, sullenly.

"You are not really angry, are you?" asked Lucy.

"I am in a strange humour," answered Theodore.

"Well, then," I said, "suppose you go to bed, and Miss Lucy and I will walk off towards the Hall."

We accordingly arose, and took our leave; but before we were out of the gate of the parsonage, Theodore had joined us, saying, that since we had done talking of Taffy, he felt himself in a better temper.

CHAPTER III.

THEODORE AND LUCY.

THE next morning, being alone in the library of the Hall, the two young gentlemen came to me. They had been paying their respects to the Mrs. Helmsleys, and had been politely received. Eugenius soon left us, but Theodore stayed behind, evidently with the intention, which afterwards appeared, of opening his whole mind to me. Our conversation was a long one; but the result of his confession to me was this, that he had that morning made a formal tender of his affections to Miss Lovel, that she had given him a favourable answer, but had said that she should wish her aunt and his parents to be consulted, and that she should desire to be directed by them, especially during her minority. He then told me that he had

few hundred pounds to spare at present. He likewise talked very largely about honours, laurels, triumphs, and so on; dwelling much upon the delight of returning ("covered with glory," as the French would say) to claim the hand of his Lucy.

"And to find," added I, "that her aunts will not let her marry you?"

"But her aunts are not her parents," answered Theodore; "and they have not so acted by her, as to have obtained a parental influence over her."

"And what then?" I asked.

"Why, when she is of age, she may take me without their consent," he replied.

"And lose all prospects of obtaining any thing from them at their deaths?" said I.

"Lucy does not want any thing from them," was his answer.

"How do you know that?" I asked.

"She says so, and I am sure she thinks so. She will have four thousand pounds; and if she had not a penny, I should not care."

"Yes, but people cannot live on love," I answered; "neither is glory a much more substantial dish."

promise be sanctioned by the old ladies. And the advice I give to you, and to Lucy, I would also give to Eugenius. I would wish him, if inclined to form any connexion, to avoid every circumstance which might justly give offence to any parent or guardian, even supposing such parent or guardian to have nothing whatever to bestow on him at death; while, at the same time, I would encourage him to cherish such an independence of feeling, of habits, and of conduct, as would enable him to be comfortable, and to live in credit, even if the old ladies should altogether fail him, and, as you say, leave all that they have to some waiting-maid. In my opinion, Eugenius would do well immediately to choose some profession: and be assured, that, conducting himself as an independent man, he is quite as likely to possess the estates of Roxobel, as if he were to dance attendance on the Helmsley lap-dogs from this time forward till he had seen the last of the old ladies laid in their graves."

"But, Mr. Airley," said Theodore, "you cannot suppose that the old ladies would

ing, instructing, or providing for the instruction of those about him. But there is hardly, on the face of the earth, any creature more unhappily situated, than a young man who is idly waiting for an estate, and depending altogether on the will of another person; unless that young man have strength of mind to occupy himself in some useful way, by which the tedium of expectation may be relieved, and other desirable objects may be presented for his attainment, besides those, which, at best, can only be procured by the death of a fellow-creature. It is, indeed, an awful state of affairs, and yet how frequent, in which an individual is induced, either by needy or ambitious and worldly feelings, to meditate with satisfaction on the death of a fellow-creature! We cannot, my dear Theodore, be too careful to avoid those situations wherein any temptation of this kind may be administered to us."

While I was proceeding to this effect, the eyes of the young man were fixed on the floor, and his whole countenance assumed a thoughtful cast. He did not

replied Theodore. "I have engaged her affections; and I have required a promise of her. Nothing now remains, I see, but to open my mind to my father and the old ladies."

"You will, in justice, then," I said, "state to these ladies, that your father, good and unsuspicious as he is, had not foreseen the consequence of your being so much with their niece."

"I will do every justice to my father, Sir. I know the extraordinary simplicity of his mind," replied Theodore: "and I have ventured to build some hopes on this very point, with respect to the Mrs. Helmsleys; for I cannot suppose that they would have allowed of this intimacy, had they any invincible objections to the consequences which might naturally be expected."

Our conversation ran to some length; but, at length, we parted, Theodore having engaged me to go to the parsonage in the evening.

I had scarcely dined, before a little note, in my Lucy's hand, was delivered to me. It contained these few words.

apparent want of caution, that, in cases of trial; she would not prove so reserved and amenable to prudence as might be wished: but I was now brought to this conclusion, that the usual extraordinary ease and simplicity of her manner was rather the result of thinking no evil, and of an enlarged and glowing charity, than of any want of that true discretion without which a fair woman is but as a jewel in a swine's snout.

I gave nearly the same advice to Lucy as I had before given to Theodore. I represented to her the obligations which she owed to her aunts as her guardians; obligations which ought not to be affected, on the one hand, by mercenary views, or on the other by any singularities in their conduct; and I took very great pains to explain to her that the relative obligations are not affected by the deficiences of either party, bringing forward the text, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward: for this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

called for a hymn. It was my part to lead it; and I chose that in which occur the following lines.—

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

"His purposes will open fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

Before our holy song was concluded, Lucy's and Sophia's voices faltered, but they recovered themselves in the last verse; and when it was finished, the doctor made some touching remarks on that state of blessedness procured for us by our beloved Saviour, where will be no changes or reverses, but one continued enjoyment of perfect peace. "O, my children!" added the good man, "what peace have I enjoyed during the seven last years; with such a wife, with such a friend, in such a paradise, with four such children! I may well expatiate on the goodness of my God.

And if there must now be some separations, yet, at least, my sons, spare me the pain, the misery, of hearing that you are acting ill: all else I could bear. Walk not on your own strength, my Theodore. In camp, in court, in field, or in city, remember that the true gentleman is he that approaches most nearly to the example exhibited by the Son of God when on earth. Take not your models from the heroes of antiquity. Splendid as some of their characters were, there were none of them who possessed such a glory of demeanour as will bear the slightest comparison with the deportment of Christ. Their earthly motives and principles are clearly discernible through the veil of their acquired splendour: and when compared with the genuine Christian character, they sink into utter insignificance, like rockets in the meridian sky, lost amid the glories of the noonday sun."

I was struck with the word "camp," which had escaped the doctor during this address, and was led to conjecture, that the good father was bringing his mind to think with

less aversion of his son's propensity to a military life.

The next morning, I was, as usual, in the library, expecting to be joined by my Lucy, who still received lessons from me, when suddenly the door was opened, and the butler announced Mrs. Winifred. I flew to set a chair, and was rather in trepidation, imagining that this visit had some reference to the affair now uppermost in my mind.

I found, however, that this was a mere visit of ceremony; for the old lady was just about to take her leave, when Theodore entered. Mrs. Winifred, who is very observant of good manners, then sat down again, and spoke very graciously to the young man; but I saw that he was embarrassed and agitated, and I began to partake of his emotions, though I did not expect that he would take this occasion to open his mind to Mrs. Winifred, as I imagined that my presence would restrain him. But, it seems, that the people of Roxobel have all agreed to vote me a sort of tame animal, before whom every family affair may be discussed with perfect freedom; it being

further supposed, that though I hear every thing, I tell nothing.

I presently saw that Theodore had prepared himself to speak; and having sat a few minutes, he at length addressed Mrs. Winifred, and made a clear, honourable, and explicit statement of his wishes with respect to Miss Lovel, his regard of long date, his views for life, and so on.

While thus speaking, there was a modest dignity in the expression of his fine countenance, which must have pleaded for him with any unprejudiced person, and I felt that had I possessed a daughter, he would not have pleaded with me in vain. I was not, however, wholly engaged by Theodore, while he was speaking: I stole many glances at Mrs. Winifred, and tried to read her countenance; but she has as much command of feature, as if she had been born and bred at court, and, undoubtedly, she had not now to learn, for the first time, that Mr. Beauchamp loved her niece.

She is generally pale, but a slight flush rose in her cheeks as Theodore proceeded, and I thought that I observed a working

in her upper lip. At length, however, she replied, and still, courtier-like, used at least a dozen sentences which had no meaning whatever, before she came to the point in question. She spoke of Lucy's beauty, good family, high expectations, accomplishments, (bowing to me, when using the last words,) sweet manners, and other similar recommendations; and then paid some compliments of a high order to Theodore, for I heard the words learning, abilities, good education, and gentlemanlike manners, intermingled with other courteous phrases. And thus, having talked herself into more courage, she proceeded to say, that she thought both parties far too young to form any thing like a matrimonial connexion; and that she therefore hoped that nothing more would be said upon that subject at present.

Theodore rejoined, that he certainly thought that they were both too young, but that he only supplicated for Mrs. Helmsley's sanction and permission to hope.

"Sir," replied Mrs. Winifred, "I cannot say that I approve of long engagements;

and I should certainly wish my niece to be left at liberty until she is of age." She then arose, took leave with dignity, and left the room, without betraying any symptoms of irritation or displeasure.

As soon as the door was closed after her, Theodore, who had run to open it for her, returned to me, remarking, "Her answer is quite as favourable as I could have expected. Are you of the same opinion, Mr. Airley? I expected that she would have flown out!"

"And I think I should have liked her as well if she had," I replied. "I don't understand her, I acknowledge."

"But had she flown out, and forbidden the house, it would have been more distressing," rejoined Theodore.

"It would," I answered; "but I confess I don't understand her."

Theodore then left me, and I sat an hour more alone; till, hearing a carriage, I went to the window, and saw the family coach drive from the door: and the next minute, Lucy entered the room in considerable agitation.

"O, Mr. Airley!" she said, "you are here! I am so glad! My aunts are gone out for their airing, and I am come to tell you all that has passed in their apartment. I wish you to know every thing, for you can judge for me. I will tell you all particulars. I was called into my aunt Winifred's dressing-room about an hour since; I found my three aunts seated, and Mrs. Nuttall busy, or appearing to be busy, at a wardrobe, at the other end of the room. I never sit down in their presence when thus called to them; and I therefore stood before them, guessing too well what they were going to say, though I could not judge, from their faces, whether they were pleased or angry. At length, Mrs. Winifred spoke, and said, "And so, Miss Lucy!" and then she stopped, while my other two aunts repeated her words. Then my aunt Winifred began again, and informed me of all that Mr. Beauchamp had said to her in the library, and then she was again silent; but I did not answer, neither did my other aunts speak out, though their lips moved. Then she spoke again, and asked me if I had encou-

raged the young man to make his wishes known respecting me; and my two other aunts repeated the question.

To this I answered, that I had certainly told him, that I would never consent to take any steps unknown to my nearest relations and my best friends. My two younger aunts remarked, that what I had done was very proper, which I thought kind; but Mrs. Winifred bit her lip, and said, "Lucy, I trust you have not given your heart to that young man?"

I was then obliged to speak out, Sir, you know," added she, blushing. "I could not help it."

"And what did you say?" I asked. "If I am to judge for you, I must know every thing."

"Why, Sir, I said"—and she hesitated: I said, that I had given him my heart before I knew I had a heart to give."

"And what did Mrs. Winifred say to this?" I enquired.

"She looked confused, Sir," replied Lucy. "And Mrs. Nuttall then came forward, and, in a very angry and impertinent

manner, as I thought, asked what I had said: on which my two younger aunts repeated my answer, one after the other; and my aunt Grizzy added, very kindly, 'It is not to be wondered at, and no great harm neither: we might have foreseen this. But you are too young to think of these things at present, niece Lovel.' And she said something about twenty years hence, which my aunt Judy repeated, and then they both exclaimed, 'Dear child! poor young thing!' and extended their kind hands to me; on which I ran up to them, and knelt before them, as they sat near to each other, and they gave me their blessing: and I felt that if I depended only on them, nothing would be denied me which was really for my good. But when I turned to look at my aunt Winifred, I was quite shocked at the expression of her countenance. She turned pale and red alternately, and her lips quivered with anger; while Mrs. Nuttall, who stood at the back of her chair, looked at me, as if she could have murdered me. And then a very strange thought came into my head, which

I shall tell you, Sir, though I will not tell it to any other person:—'Surely there must be more than I once thought in that old jest respecting David Nuttall: is it possible that they have thought of me for David?' However, when I had knelt to my two younger aunts, and received their blessing, I arose, and went towards Mrs. Winifred, fearing she might be offended if I did not shew the same submission to her; but she drew away her hand, which trembled violently, and fell into a kind of hysteric. And then Mrs. Nuttall really scolded her, and led or rather dragged her into her bedroom; and my two younger aunts, being frightened, bade me go and be a good girl. So I ran to my room, and did not move from it till I saw the carriage drive away with the old ladies in it. And now, my dear tutor, what am I to think?"

"Indeed," I replied, "I know not what you ought to think. All I can say, my child, is, that you must pray for the divine direction, and, with the divine help, you must exercise that prudence which is especially necessary to so young a creature, having

no mother, and being so unfavourably situated as you are. Excellent as Mrs. Beauchamp is, she is too indulgent, and wants discernment and activity. I do not advise you to change your views respecting Theodore, if you could: but let him see and respect in you the utmost delicacy and modesty. Seek not to be alone with him; but rather avoid the occasions. Exercise a pure and holy influence over his character; and, if you will accept of me as a counsellor, for want of a better, I will watch, and guard, and protect you, as a father would a dear and only daughter."

"For want of a better!" repeated Lucy; "my father, my friend!"—and she burst into tears. "I must cease to live, when I cease to love and honour you. Promise me, Mr. Airley, when I have a house, that you will live with me. Only promise me this, and I will be the most dutiful, the most affectionate, of daughters. But please to watch me, and tell me when I do wrong, and then I shall be happy."

And the next moment, her sweet face brightened up, all clouds passed away,

and her wonted smiles, like the morning upon the mountains, again illuminated her lovely face.

O Lucy dear! how art thou wound around my heart!

CHAPTER IV.

ELLEN.

WHEN parted from Lucy, and arrived in my own room, I became more and more perplexed by what had passed. The conduct of the younger Mrs. Helmsleys seemed to be simple and kind; and I augured that, as they seemed to be content with so inferior a marriage for their niece, in point of fortune, they had probably resolved to give the bulk of the property to Eugenius, and thus to keep the great Helmsley estate together. All this seemed plain and straight-forward; but Mrs. Winifred's conduct, and the influence of Mrs. Nuttall, were beyond my comprehension, and the more I thought of them, the greater and greater were the difficulties which appeared to involve them.

Meditating on these and many other subjects which seemed naturally to arise from the consideration of passing events, I walked out immediately after dinner, taking a book in my pocket, and turned my steps towards the park. My wandering feet led me in the direction of Torville, that silent, dark, and solitary mansion, which I had never visited since I had met with so rude a salutation there, soon after my arrival at Roxobel. My inclinations led me once again to climb the gate and enter the wood, which appeared more dark, dank, and intertangled, than ever. Mystery and silence seemed to dwell in these solitudes, and to be strikingly contrasted with the smiling beauties of the cultivated regions which surrounded them.

It seemed to me as if a sort of act of oblivion had been passed upon the inhabitants of Torville, for I had hardly heard them mentioned, either for good or bad, for several years; nor had the widow herself been seen since I came to Roxobel, although it was believed that she still lived, since it was necessary for her to make an annual

signature to some paper, which was always forwarded to the old mansion for that purpose, by Mr. Jeffry Griffith. Impolite as my former reception at Torville had been, I, notwithstanding, felt this evening in a humour to reconnoitre the premises a second time; for it will be already understood that I have as large a share of curiosity as generally falls to the lot of any individual of the human race. Accordingly I walked on; and, low as I am, was more than once obliged to stop, by reason of the boughs, which in some places almost rendered my path impassable. It was not my intention, as formerly, to enter into the court of this enchanted castle, but merely to gaze on the exterior of the edifice. I therefore proceeded, but was somewhat startled, as I advanced, to hear quick footsteps behind me, and turning round, in expectation of seeing nothing less disagreeable than Mrs. Jane Rawson, or her husband, I was astonished at beholding the lovely figure of Ellen, dressed in the costume of a peasant, in a blue petticoat which was very full, and a bodice of the same coarse

materials, a white kerchief and apron, and a flat straw hat, from beneath which her raven hair appeared in glossy ringlets, partly falling over her face. Sombre as was the wood, the glowing carnation of her cheeks and lips, and the brilliancy of her eyes, flashed upon my view; and I could not help expressing the pleasure I felt in beholding such a creature in a scene so unpropitious, instead of some such frightful apparition as I had expected.

"Good evening, Sir," she said, dropping a low courtesy; "I am glad to see you here, for I was half afraid."

"Half afraid!" I repeated; "then wherefore are you here at all?"

She then informed me that her grandmother, who was in a very bad state of health, had been ordered to take asses' milk; and that she herself, having heard that there was an ass with a foal at Torille, as she could get none elsewhere, had come so far with the intention of begging hard for it, though with very little hope of success.

"Nobly dared, my fair damsel!" I ex-

claimed, "and I am glad that I happen to be here at this time to be your 'squire. So, on—on: we will see what we can do. But I much fear that we shall meet with more gall than milk in this place."

We now took new courage, the damsel and I, and on we proceeded till the dark mouldy walls appeared before us, and a door presented itself at which I knew that it was vain to knock or call, for a woodman's hatchet, to remove the briers and ivy, would have been necessary, before it could possibly have administered entrance to any one. We, however, looked up to the dark square turret which peeped above the wall, and heard the noise of dogs and poultry within the court.

"Come," said I, "I must be your guide. I have not forgotten my way, though it is seven years since I was here last. And let me bethink myself. Who is the person I am to enquire after? Yes, I have it!" I added, after a moment's reflection. "Come on, fair maid; wind round the back of these sheds and hovels: we shall find a door presently."

So saying, we pressed forward, though we got two or three tumbles over the rubbish, our feet being caught in the long wiry fibres of the bind-weed which ran across the path. At length we came to the entrance which I had tried on my former visit, namely, the door which led through a sort of stable; and passing through this, we found ourselves in the yard or court, where we were saluted with the baying and howling of various dogs, together with the gobbling of turkeys and the hissing of geese. Notwithstanding this dreadful clamour, we saw no human creature for the space of five minutes or more. At length, however, a female appeared, whom I instantly recognised as the redoubtable Mrs. Rawson, who might well have passed for a famished tigress, ready to spring upon her prey.

The fury closed the door of the house after her, as she descended into the yard, and bade us tell what we wanted, and then get away about our business as soon as possible. Ellen very civilly made her request known; on which the amazon replied to this effect: "If we have any asses' milk,

it a'n't for you; so spare yourself the trouble of coming here again. We have nothing to give, and nothing to sell; so the sooner you take yourself off, mistress, the better." And then, turning to me, and measuring my figure with her eye, and with an expression of mingled contempt and aversion, "And so," she added, "you must needs come again too! What may your errand now be? But any pretext will serve you, I reckon, for peering and prying into other people's business. Ar'n't you ashamed of yourself, to be meddling and making, as they say you do, in every body's affairs? But take my advice; go your ways home, and let me and my husband alone."

Here, while the virago stopped to take breath, a loud voice from behind me suddenly awakened the sleeping echoes of the old walls; and the next minute Robert Taylor appeared in his working-dress, and all glowing with exercise.

"Then it was you, Ellen," said the young man, in a reproachful tone, "that I saw from the hill? I thought as much, though

I could hardly believe my own eyes when I saw you turn into this wood. Are you weary of your life, that you should think of setting your foot in this hornet's nest? And Mr. Airley too!" added the youth, bowing and touching his hat as he spoke. "Good Sir, what could have brought you into this place?"

"What could have brought them, do you ask?" replied the vixen; "what, but their own curiosity? There is never a corner of the parish into which *he* does not put his head," she added, pointing at me. "He thinks I do not know him; but though I have not held much discourse with him, I know some as have. I know him to be what he is, and that's what any Christian would count no good: and therefore I say what I do; and that is, that the sooner he goes from hence the better, for I want none of his wizard tricks to be played upon me. And so," she added, setting her arms on her sides, and looking with defiance, "you had best all be packing, for I have nothing for you."

"No asses' milk at all?" said Ellen, smiling, for the presence of young Taylor had given her courage; "no asses' milk for me, Ma'am?"—and the young girl dropped a courtesy, with a kind of playful sauciness which I thought became her well.

On this, the virago's cheeks began to swell, and her lips to foam with the angry words which were gathering in her mouth; but, before she could utter them, I stepped a little nearer to her than I had hitherto ventured to do, and, making a profound reverence, I said, "Permit me, Madam, before I take my departure, to ask you one question. Perhaps you may recollect a visit I paid to you about seven years since, at which time I came to enquire after a certain person of the name of Grimshaw; one Mr. Anthony Grimshaw, the son of old Grimshaw. May I beg to know if this same Mr. Anthony Grimshaw lodges anywhere hereabouts?"

Having made my speech, I was admonished by the menacing attitude of the dame, that it might be as well for me to retreat behind Robert.

The young man, in the mean time, being quite alive to the joke, followed me up with much promptness, and, going nearer to the virago than any of us had hitherto ventured to do, he said, "Mrs. Rawson, if Mr. Grimshaw happen to be within, do allow Mr. Airley to see him. Is he within, think you, at the present time? Do permit me to go in and enquire: you will greatly oblige us." So saying, he sprang to the door, and knocking loudly, he laid his hand on the latch, and was just on the point of opening it, when Mrs. Rawson, turning pale as death, and then red as flames, burst forth into such a torrent of abuse, as surely has not often proceeded from female lips.

"Stand back, young man!" she exclaimed, springing up the steps, and dragging his hand by main force from the latch; "would you break into the house? I will have the law of you."

"The law!" repeated Robert, laughing; the law! what, for paying a visit of compliments to a gentleman lodging in your house! We cannot think of going back

without seeing Mr. Grimshaw. Indeed we can't, Mrs. Rawson."

"It's all a lie and pretence," she exclaimed; "it's all a pretence to get in. You are a parcel of spies; and I will loose the dogs upon you."

"Spies!" rejoined Robert; "why should you be afraid of spies? Honest folks don't fear spies."

"I scorn your words," retorted the woman.

"You don't," replied Robert; "you are trembling now! But is Mr. Grimshaw at home?"

"I know not such a one," was her angry reply.

"Well then," rejoined Robert, "I must see your mistress, and question her respecting him."

"She is not at home," answered the woman.

"Where is she then?" asked Robert, seriously. "Is she gone to visit James Torville?"

The woman now turned deadly pale; and Robert retreating towards me, said, "There

have been black doings in this house, Mr. Airley; and I shall just put it into Mr. Griffith's head, the next time he wants a paper signed, to call here in person, and see the widow herself."

The woman heard these words, but took no notice of them; and we withdrew from the yard.

"Ellen," said Robert, as soon as we had reached the wood, "if ever you come here again, I will never forgive you. Are you mad, to put your head in this lion's den?"

"Of what," asked I, "do you suspect these people?"

"Of every thing bad," was his answer. Did you see, Mr. Airley, how frightened the woman was, when I asked her after her mistress? But I will put Mr. Griffith up to them. I will put him up to insist upon seeing the poor widow herself: for I should not wonder if they have murdered her." And then turning to Ellen, he again asked her what she had come for.

She replied, "For asses' milk."

"And did not you meet me in the lane this

very evening?" he enquired; "and could not you have asked me to get you an ass to give your grandmother milk? and did not you turn, when you came to the end of the village, and tell me not to follow you? And did not you make as if you were going into the shop? And what was all that for?"

"Because—" replied Ellen, hesitatingly.

"Because what?" said the young man, sharply.

"Because I did not want you to come with me," added Ellen.

"Then I am to suppose that you like Jenny Rawson's company better than mine?" rejoined Robert.

"By no means," I remarked; "but Ellen is prudent, and I am glad to see that she is so."

"Well, then," said Robert, in displeasure, "if she thinks it more prudent to go alone among those bad people at Torville, than to walk across a field with an old schoolfellow, why, she must enjoy her own opinion; but few folks, I believe, will think with her."

The two young people then separated, Ellen dropping behind me, and Robert clearing the way before me; and thus we walked till we came to the end of the wood, and stood on the brow of the park. "Good by, Ellen," I said; "you are going home, I suppose?"

"Good by, Sir, and thank you for your company," she replied.

"I shall stay where I am, Ellen," I remarked, "and watch you over the park."

"Thank you, Sir," she answered; and she was then turning away, not once deigning to look on Robert, when, calling after her, he said, "I shall be down in the morning with the ass and foal; can you keep them on the rock?"

"Thank you, Robert," she replied; "but it don't signify."

Robert looked sorrowfully. He held in his hand a wreath of wild honeysuckles, which he had plucked from the hedge near the stile: he followed Ellen a few steps, and presented them to her. I did not hear what he said, but I saw her take the wreath: and I thought that this young pair would

have made a most beautiful picture, just as I beheld them at the moment that she turned to take the flowers; the expression of sorrow shed over both their faces adding much to the interest of their naturally beautiful countenances. She then went on, and he stood looking at her, as if nothing but my presence prevented him from following her.

Robert Taylor and I had always been the best of friends. I accordingly called him to me, (for I had taken a seat on the root of an oak tree,) and said, "I will not have you follow that young girl, Robert. It is not kind. You well know that she is worse than an orphan; having a bad father, and a weak mother, and the good old grandmother, who has reared her, being confined entirely to her bed."

"Sir," replied Robert, looking down, "I mean no harm. Indeed I do not."

"I don't say," I replied, "that you have sat down to plan any harm: but you have sense; and you do not act without any meaning at all, I suppose. Either let that young thing alone, or make up your

mind to ask your parents to let you choose her for a wife: one thing or other, my dear boy. Ellen is under my protection: I have already promised her grandmother that I will watch over her; and indeed I would have done as much had I not made the promise. And so, my good youth, I must either insist that you leave off following her, or that you come forward and say what you mean."

The young man made no answer.

"Come," I added, "let me speak to you as a friend. I am full twenty years older than you are. I have been a great observer; and this I can say, that I never saw the man, in youth or old age, who paid no respect to the wives and daughters of other men, and yet was blessed in his own. It is true, that the Almighty, in his infinite mercy, does not punish those in another world, who, having repented of their sins, and having been brought to unite themselves with Christ, are regenerated and sanctified. But the Almighty is just as well as merciful: and this is certain, that the penalty of our misdeeds will follow us

in some degree upon earth; and, as surely as you injure the domestic happiness of any human being whatever, so surely will you be made to suffer in your own peace and honour. And now, at this moment, while you are young and uncorrupted, let the words of a paternal friend prevail. Seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and retain that integrity of character, that uprightness of principle, which made me single you out from all your companions at school, as my prime favourite, when I first came to Roxobel. Though your rank is that of a yeoman, and not of a nobleman, yet what hinders, that you should have all the virtues, all the delicacy, and all the decencies, of the true Christian gentleman? Give me not the pain, my son, of thinking that all my instructions have been lost upon you."

The young man had looked on the ground while I spoke; but when I had concluded, he raised his fine eyes, and said, "Sir, I thank you; I know that you are my friend, and I will pray—yes, Sir, I will pray to be kept out of temptation."

"So God be with you, my son," I replied. "And now, good evening, and remember that you have a friend in me."

He gave me a look more expressive than a thousand words; and, having cast one lingering glance at Ellen, whose figure was now diminished in distance, he sprang away up the hills, and was out of sight in a few seconds.

CHAPTER V.

INTERVIEWS IN THE WOOD.

HAVING parted from Ellen and Robert, I arose from my seat, and continued to ascend the heights of the park, till at length I reached the woods that overhang the higher pools. These woods have always been connected in my mind with my first visit to them in company with Eugenius and Theodore, at which time the echo had been made to repeat the melodious name of the lovely Sophia. The remembrance of this walk has always been sweet to me, inasmuch as I date my friendship with these two fine and interesting young men from that day. I have also a kind of sorrowful pleasure in comparing what they then were, with what they are now; and in thinking how those trials seemed even

then to be preparing for them, under which they were now, I feared, about to be severely exercised.

While considering these subjects, I had taken my seat on a little grassy eminence which overhung the upper pool; and had I not feared that a peasant, or some other passenger, might fancy that the little man of Roxobel was suddenly demented, and had taken leave of his senses, I am not sure whether I should not have called upon Echo to ascertain whether she had forgotten the lesson which Eugenius had used so many exertions to teach her.

However, I sat still, and was soothed by the melody of birds, and the harmony of rushing waters and rustling breezes.

Presently I heard a step; (for I was doomed to hear steps this evening where I least expected them;) and, looking up, I saw Eugenius.

He expressed much pleasure at meeting me, saying that he had been trying to trace me all the afternoon, and had once caught sight of me, but had lost me near the woods of Torville.

"Had you entered those woods you would have found me," I answered: "but I imagine that you fear the ghost?"

"I have heard very little of the ghost for some years past," replied the young man: "but, to be plain with you, Mr. Airley, there was a time when I was dreadfully afraid of it; and I once mistook a horse, with a white face, for the very identical spirit of poor James Torville. But those days are past; and, perhaps, the time may come when I shall consider my present troubles to be as visionary as those of my childhood."

"Your present troubles!" I repeated. "I hope nothing new of an unpleasant nature has happened?"

"Nothing more than you know, Mr. Airley," rejoined Eugenius, seating himself by me on the grass: "yet my heart is heavy, and I want to speak with you respecting many things. And, first, Mr. Airley, what do you think of the affairs of Theodore? Did he act prudently in opening his mind regarding my sister to my aunts?"

"I do not think," I replied, "that openness and sincerity have ever eventually a bad effect, even in worldly matters. I therefore cannot suppose Theodore to have done wrong, even if he had no other rule of action than the promotion of his own interest."

"And such being your opinion, Sir," said Eugenius, "would you advise me to act in a similar manner? Ought I to be equally candid with my aunts respecting my own affairs? Ought I to consult them before I take any step of importance relative to my future life?"

"Do you consider your aunts as your guardians?" I replied.

"In some degree," he answered, "as being my nearest relations. But I was placed by my father under the parental superintendence of my mother, exclusive of all other, and she, in dying, committed me to the especial care of Dr. Beauchamp; though I resided with my sister at the Hall for two years after my mother's death. Since that time, however, my aunts have taken little notice of me: my aunt Winifred, es-

pecially, has seemed to regard me very little."

"As the case is thus stated," I replied, "I understand that whatever filial duty you owe is owed to Dr. Beauchamp; and that, although you are bound to pay all proper respect to your aunts, as being your elders and your relatives, yet you are not bound to sacrifice the happiness of your life to their caprices, if they should happen to be capricious in their requirements from you."

"Then," said Eugenius, "it is not necessary, you think, that I should consult them respecting Sophia Beauchamp; for whom, I must inform you, that I certainly entertain so strong an affection that the world without her would be a wilderness to me?"

"You certainly are at liberty, when you are of age," I answered, "to take your own counsel in this respect, provided that you have her father's consent."

"But, Mr. Airley," rejoined Eugenius, with some hesitation, "you are aware, that although, should the old ladies die with-

out a will, I am their heir, yet they have the power of leaving the whole estate to a stranger, if I should offend them."

"I understand this," I replied.

"And if I consult them, and they refuse their acquiescence in my wishes, they probably may disinherit me."

"They probably may," I answered: "and they probably may do as much if you happen to tread on the tail of one of their lap-dogs."

"I see this," said Eugenius: "but what inferences do you deduct from these circumstances?"

"Why," I replied, "I would draw these inferences;—I would infer, that you, being a young man of spirit and abilities, having received a good education, and being possessed of a little independence, should commit it entirely to Providence to do what is best for you with respect to the Roxobel estates; and that, in the mean time, you should act towards your aunts in such a manner as is requisite from a gentleman and a Christian towards the sisters of his mother and the elders of his family. Suppressing all

anxiety with respect to these important possessions, these lands and houses, which may be yours, and may be another's, you should act, my young friend, as if you had no further views upon the old ladies, than to deserve their esteem and to contribute to their happiness. And again, reckoning upon nothing more than what you now really possess, namely, your four thousand pounds, you should enter upon some liberal profession, and devote your talents to some useful purpose. By so doing, my dear Eugenius, you will have an object in view, the attainment of which will depend, not upon the changeable will of your seniors, but upon your own steady and persevering efforts. You will no longer be considered as a needy heir, waiting the death of his near relations; but will rise at once into respectability in the sight of every person who has any correct notion of true dignity. And more than this, my friend, you will be out of the way of all the Roxobel lap-dogs, and out of danger of treading on their tails."

Eugenius seemed to be considerably agi-

tated during my discourse; and when I had ceased to speak, he was silent for some minutes. At length, he said, "Mr. Airley, I admire your mode of thinking: but I fear that I cannot bring myself to follow your advice."

"Well," I answered, "you are not yet of age; therefore take time to think. We will have more discussions on this subject by and by. But, my young friend, have you not been almost too late in asking my advice respecting the lovely Sophia?"

"How so, Sir?" asked Eugenius, eagerly.

"Why," I replied, "have you not already so conducted yourself, with regard to your tutor's daughter, that the choice is no longer left you with respect to the manner in which you ought to proceed?"

"Sir," replied Eugenius, "I would rather give up all my pretensions to Roxobel, than renounce the happiness of spending my life with my sweet Sophia."

"And is this a new feeling?" I asked.

"No, Sir," he replied; "I do not remember the time when I did not love Sophia more than any earthly good."

"And you believe that your affection is returned?" I said.

"Sir," replied Eugenius, "could I question my angel's regard for me, I should be the most miserable of men."

"Well," I rejoined, "all I can say is this, that I am more and more convinced of the blindness of human wisdom. What have all your elders been about, in not foreseeing this probable result of the strict intimacy which has been growing up among their children? And as to myself, I have been no better than a mole in the business. I have just opened my eyes now and then, and peeped about me for a short time, and then closed them again. However, my dear Eugenius, I can say no more at present. This certainly is not a moment for you to bring your affairs before the Mistress Helmsleys. At any rate, wait a few days, till the irritation respecting Theodore is a little passed from the mind of Mrs. Winifred."

"Mr. Airley," said Eugenius, "there is another subject of uneasy reflection for me. Was not the behaviour of Mrs. Wini-

fred, in the conference with my sister this morning, altogether inexplicable?"

"Has not her conduct, as respects Mrs. Nuttall, been inexplicable for years past?" I enquired. "Is not the influence of that woman over such a mind as Mrs. Helmsley's, what we cannot understand? But O, my son, when we look abroad on the inconsistencies and follies of our fellow-creatures, and when we look at home into the deceitfulness of our own hearts, how should we be urged and incited to fix our anchor on the Rock of Ages, where it never can be moved! I look forward to your experiencing many years of pain and anxiety, my dear Eugenius, unless you can bring your mind to cast your cares upon Providence, leaving your future prospects in the hands of God; and to adopt that simple and dignified line of conduct, whereby you may not only assert your independence, but also, with the divine blessing, obtain a handsome competency. Were your aunts simple-minded women, (and I deem the younger ones to be in this respect superior to the elder,) they would not keep

you in suspense, but would make you acquainted with their intentions respecting you; and your stating to them the resolution you have formed of following a profession, might be a means of bringing them to some avowal of their purposes."

After a moment's reflection, Eugenius said, "I should not like a military life, nor the quibbles of the law; neither do I feel myself fitted for the higher situations of the medical profession."

"Well," I replied, "then nothing remains for you, but that noblest and most interesting of all professions, the church."

"I am not fit for the church," was his answer, with some degree of irritation in his manner.

"I shall not argue with you, my Eugenius," I replied. "You came here to consult me: I have given you my best advice; and I shall not be offended if you do not follow it. Indeed, I wish you ever to consider me as a friend, always at hand, and ready to assist, and one that will not be easily wearied."

Eugenius gave me his hand, and attempted

to speak, but he wanted command of voice. We then remained silent for some minutes, both of us being lost in thought.

At length I spoke. "Our minds, at present, my dear Eugenius," I said, "are like the landscape now before us, obscured for a moment by passing clouds. The brilliant tints which an instant past gilded the summits of the woods, have vanished; and the bosom of the waters, but now so bright and sparkling, has assumed a dark cold hue: yet we, who look on the prospect from an exalted station, can see the body of the sun above the cloud which hangs beneath it. Thus, my Eugenius, should we learn to look with the eye of faith beyond the changes and chances of this present life, feeling assured that all things will work together for good to them that love the Lord. It is in the time of trials like these, my son, that our principles are brought to the proof, and we are made to understand what spirit we are of. Nevertheless, if we would but suffer faith to have its perfect work, we might soon observe that every devious step we could take would have no better effect

than that of involving us more and more deeply in trouble, and of counteracting the workings of a kind Providence, benevolently ready to bestow as much temporal happiness on our probationary state as would be consistent with our everlasting welfare."

"Mr. Airley," said Eugenius, "events have so crowded upon me since I returned from Oxford, that it is impossible for me at present to meditate with advantage on what I ought to do. My mind is full of anxiety respecting my sister and my Theodore: they have my most earnest wishes for their mutual happiness; and I should rejoice to be able to call my Theodore a brother indeed."

We then arose, and directing our steps towards the parsonage, we soon found ourselves in the woods immediately behind that elegant and quiet tenement. Here, as we were hastening along in a somewhat serious mood, almost fearing that we should be too late for Mrs. Beauchamp's tea, we suddenly heard the sound of our names issuing from a thicket, and turning round, and

looking through a vista of the woods, we perceived, on a grassy glade, the lovely assemblage of our best friends, placed in a circle, the ladies being busy with their needles, the doctor being half seated, half recumbent, on the grass, and Theodore being engaged in reading aloud.

"Whither so fast, good people?" cried the doctor. "If you happen to be looking for good entertainment, we advise you to halt here, at the sign of the green bough. I doubt whether you will meet with pleasanter company, or a kinder welcome, than in this place, under the green wood tree."

We instantly accepted the invitation, and were saluted with many dimpled smiles from the lovely wood nymphs who haunted these fair solitudes.

"Theodore has been entertaining us with some choice passages of Milton's Paradise Lost," said the doctor, as we seated ourselves among our friends; "and Mrs. Beauchamp will presently add to the regale some of the infusion of her best tea. We must seize as many opportunities as we can, my good friend," added the excellent man,

"of enjoying ourselves, during these summer months, amid these beautiful scenes. We must provide our children with as many pleasing associations of ideas, connected with the most exquisite objects of nature, as we have opportunity for, before we are separated from each other, and before new establishments are formed at a distance from the parental roof; to which events we must now look forward in the natural course of things. I would desire that the recollection of their parental friends should naturally arise, in the minds of my children, whenever they survey the fair works of God."

Then suddenly turning to Theodore, the good father extended his hand to him, his eyes glistening with tears, and added, "My Theodore, my son, when you are far away, I am resolved that you shall never see a hill illumined with the rays of heaven, a waterfall sparkling amid the shade of a wood, or a tree rich in fruit, and fragrant with blossoms; that you shall never hear the singing of birds, or the murmuring of the wind, without recalling

some happy moment of early youth, and feeling a renewed desire to be worthy of those dear friends whose presence rendered that happy moment so indescribably sweet."

The tender father spoke with enthusiasm; and the expression of his eye, as it fell on his beloved son, was ineffably tender and affectionate. But no one answered; no one dared to speak; and no sound interrupted the affecting silence, till it was broken by the audible sobs of Lucy. The sympathetic feeling instantly imparted itself to Sophia, and even to Mrs. Beauchamp: the eyes of both of whom filled with tears. But Lucy, not being able to recover herself, was led away a short distance by Theodore, and we perceived that the noble youth was endeavouring to revive those lovely smiles which could not be readily spared from our little circle. Indeed, we have always compared the smiles of our Lucy to the beaming glories of meridian day; and, on the other hand, those of our Sophia appear to resemble the softer radiance of moonlight, attempered with an

animating warmth which the chilly rays of the moon are unequal to impart.

The servants now appeared with the preparations for tea, which they spread upon the grass. The fair Lucy presently joined our party; and we all endeavoured, in the pious enjoyment of the present, connected with a lively sense of the paternal care of a wise and tender Providence, to lose all uneasy anticipations of the future.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COMMISSION.

Dated some time after the last.

SEVERAL happy days and weeks have passed since our young friends returned from Oxford. Yet why should I say happy? Are they not more sweet in the recollection than in the reality?—for, during the whole of this time, there has been hanging over every mind a presentiment of some approaching change, by which a termination must be put, for a time at least, to our delightful intercourse. During this period we have met together almost every evening, and we have considered every day as lost in which we were not able to spend many hours in each other's society. In this

time, I have taken three walks to the Rock, to call on my good old friend Mrs. Goodwill, who is going rapidly the way of all flesh. The poor woman is uneasy about her daughter. This poor creature is, indeed, a very inferior person to her mother, and seems quite cast down and debilitated under the ill treatment of a profligate husband.

"I have wanted faith," said Mrs. Goodwill, the last time we met, "for I have grieved very sorely over every infant whom my poor daughter has laid in the grave; and yet, at this moment, the state of these little departed ones is my chief consolation. My comfort springs from the assurance which I feel of their everlasting happiness; for I stedfastly believe that they, together with all other infants who have departed this life before they have committed actual sin, are rendered worthy of salvation through the imputed merits of Christ, and, having been renewed in his likeness, are received into glory. Those of my grandchildren who are left with my daughter are therefore my only care. But,

Mr. Airley," she added, "when I am no more, you will not forget poor Ellen? You will have an eye to her, you will watch her, and advise her? And little Henry, too, if he lives, you will also be a friend to him? May I hope so much, my good Sir?"

I gave the poor woman a most solemn assurance that I would attend to her wishes: and I was much affected by the deep and pious feelings of gratitude which she expressed. I had some difficulty in persuading her to accept those succours which she really required; but I trust, that between me and the good ladies at the Hall, (for the Mrs. Helmsleys are very kind to the poor,) aided by Mr. Barnaby Semple, in his professional capacity, this excellent person has been supplied with every thing necessary to alleviate her sufferings and increase her comfort.

I understand from poor Mrs. Goodwill, that her daughter, Mary Grosvenor, has had eight children, only two of whom are now living, namely, the pretty Ellen, who has been educated under the care of her grandmother, and who has also been in

some degree under my tutorage ever since I came to Roxobel, and an infant of a few months old, named Henry, which name was given him in honour of myself, in consequence of my having undertaken to answer for him at the font.

A few days since, the doctor, his lady, the young people, and myself, dined, by invitation, at the Hall: it was a formal occasion, and the usual party were assembled, namely, Mr. Barnaby Semple, the steward, and the two Misses Finchley. I was anxious to observe Mrs. Winifred's deportment to the young people, and so was the doctor. Her conduct to Lucy was not very different from what it always has been: she called her once or twice to sit by her, and took her hand and held it within hers, which last token of regard was, indeed, more than I ever saw before. She was also exceedingly polite to Theodore, and rallied him upon his military ardour, calling him "the captain;" yet all this was done politely and pleasantly.

On this encouragement, Theodore's spirits rose, as might have been expected.

He certainly put the most favourable construction on Mrs. Winifred's civility, and took occasion, after tea, to place himself on one side of the old lady, while his beloved one was seated on the other; and, in this situation, he allowed himself to use several expressions such as are only suitable to an accepted and favoured suitor.

One of these expressions I recollect perfectly well. Mrs. Winifred had been speaking of the opportunities which a military life administers of seeing the world, and polishing the manners: and Theodore asked Lucy, in a playful way, how she should like to see foreign countries, and live in camps; promising her the choice of the very best quarters whenever he should have risen to the rank of a colonel.

My sweet Lucy smiled, but made no answer; and, to my great amazement, though this speech was made across Mrs. Winifred, the old lady made no remark, nor even drew herself up, or looked grave.

The ease and openness of Theodore had somewhat startled me, but I must confess that the manner of Mrs. Winifred surprised

me still more; for to allow the young man, after what had passed, to speak in this way to her niece, without reproof, was to give him as much encouragement as he could possibly have expected.

During this whole evening, however, Mrs. Winifred took little notice of Eugenius, and was only politely attentive to Sophia. But I remarked what pleased me very much in Mrs. Judy and Mrs. Grizzy. Some mention being made of the name of Helmsley and its first origin, Mrs. Winifred observed, that she hoped the name would be adopted by the future possessor of the Hall; and Mrs. Grizzy and Mrs. Judy both repeated the expression, looking at the same time at Eugenius, and adding, "You must remember that, nephew."

After this visit, the young people were in high spirits for several days; and my Lucy and Theodore, believing that their regard had obtained the sanction of all their friends, gave themselves up to the full enjoyment of their happy prospects.

These were halcyon days indeed, and we all partook of their sunny influence.

Here, at this time, I witnessed the most beautiful exhibition of Christian principles, elegant manners, and intellectual refinement. Here I remarked the most delightful play of innocent fancy and harmless wit. And it was here, during this interval of sunshine, that I beheld those feelings of affection which were implanted in our nature before the fall of man, exhibiting their most refined, most elegant, and most exalted influence. These feelings, as I have observed, are the gifts of a kind Providence; and are therefore intended to be sources of happiness to the human race: so that the object of parents and guardians should not be to annihilate them, or to stifle them; but to bring them under the control of religion and reason, and to render them subordinate to every superior duty.

At length, the blessed calm of this delightful period drew towards its close, and other feelings besides those of innocent joy were to be called into exercise.

I was sitting, one morning, in the library at the Hall, expecting every moment to see my Lucy, when Theodore burst into the

room. His face was all on fire, from the influence of strong emotion. He advanced with haste, and, before I could ask a question, exclaimed, "Mr. Airley, think of the kindness of Mrs. Winifred!—she has obtained a commission for me in His Majesty's service! And she has promised more—she has promised to advance my promotion as rapidly as the laws of the army will permit! It now depends only on me to be in the next gazette as an ensign, and as a lieutenant as soon after as possible."

I rose; I looked at the young man; but I could not speak.

"How kind! how very kind!" added Theodore. "I had no reason to expect this: Mrs. Winifred has shewn herself a friend indeed." So saying, he took a turn in the large apartment, with such an air that I believed he fancied himself already invested with his sword and gorget.

"But your father, Theodore," I asked, "what will he think? Will he thus be induced to part with his only son?"

Theodore turned short upon me in the

middle of the room. "Induced!" he repeated; "he will be all rapture on the occasion! And then what joy, what delight, when I return after a few campaigns, to claim my Lucy's hand?" And he then repeated his manœuvres about the room, striking his heels on the floor, as if he felt already that his boots were soled with iron.

It is of little consequence what I felt on this occasion; but I hardly know when I was more overcome by my feelings. I had not, however, much time to think of myself, for the door of the library was again opened, and Lucy and Sophia entered together. Both were in tears. They ran forward to Theodore: Sophia took his hand, and looked wistfully in his face; but Lucy stood near him, and burst into an agony of tears. The countenance of the young man instantly changed, and assumed an expression of deep concern. He seemed not to regard his sister, but instantly caught his beloved by the hand; the excess of her feelings appearing to have made her almost ready to sink.

"Lucy, my Lucy," he exclaimed, "why those tears? Is not this an occasion of joy, rather than of sorrow? The sooner I leave you, the sooner I shall return; and then we part no more."

Lucy could not speak; but Sophia sighed, and said, "Ah, brother!"

Theodore turned, and looked tenderly upon her. "Don't weep, my sweet sister," he said; "I shall soon return. I am not going far: the regiment is in England; and the next summer you may see me again."

"*May* see you again! *may* see Theodore again!" repeated Sophia. "But Oh, what may happen to prevent that *may* from ever being realized?"

Lucy was past the power of speech, but her sobs were most eloquent. The scene was such as I could not bear; and I therefore walked within the deep embrasure of one of the windows, and for some minutes heard nothing but the sobs of Lucy, which seemed to overpower every other sound.

At length, returning from the place into which I had withdrawn, I perceived that

the three young people had placed themselves on the sofa, Theodore being seated between the two young ladies. He was holding the hand of his sister, and was bending over the weeping Lucy, with such an expression of tender and deep concern as I had never before observed on his countenance. O what would I have given, could some skilful pencil have traced the figures of these three lovely creatures as they then sat! and yet, are they not traced upon my heart in lines and tints which no human hand could imitate?

The young people were by this time become more composed, and I listened to every word which was dropped, wishing to ascertain whether the ladies had prevailed upon the young man to give up his commission, or whether such was their object. I accordingly soon discovered, that, whatever might have passed while I was standing in the window, all Theodore's arguments of consolation were still built, not on his refusing the commission, but upon his hopes of a speedy and happy return: and indeed, had I been asked for my opi-

nion, I myself should hardly have known what to have advised. The grief, however, of the young ladies seemed to be so deep, and so sincere, that it was not at present to be mitigated: and as Lucy continued to weep incessantly, Theodore requested her to walk out with him and his sister into the woods, at the same time entreating me to go to the parsonage, and open the matter to Doctor Beauchamp; a painful task, which I would gladly have avoided.

After the departure of the young people, I lingered awhile in the library, standing in the window, and watching my fair Lucy and her friend, as Theodore led them across the lawn to the nearest shade. It was a glorious morning. The air was perfumed with a thousand blossoms; and the light clouds which traversed the blue ether cast their passing shades over the sunny lawn, where many deer and herds of cattle were feeding in undisturbed tranquillity.

There is something in the serene beauty of natural scenery, which, when it is brought under the observation of the human mind

while in a state of strong excitement arising from violent emotion, has an influence particularly affecting. The peculiar sensation which arises in the mind, under such circumstances, is derived from a persuasion of the transitory nature of the life of man, and of all his worldly pursuits, in comparison with the relative perpetuity of the natural world; the grand features of which, at such a moment, appear almost to possess an eternity of duration. Perfectly in unison with these sentiments, was my train of meditation on the present occasion. "When those fair human beings who are now crossing the park," thought I, "were only in the dawn of life, those hoary woods, those fir-crowned hills, that ancient tower, stood as they now stand: twenty summers and twenty winters seem to have wrought no change in them. Neither will they appear to have undergone any revolution, when all who now fret and fume, plan and project, on the busy stage of life, shall have been laid low in the dust of death. If life then is so short, so evanescent, how ought we to take account of the object for which

it was given, and the end towards which it hastens! Yet notwithstanding the importance of his future and eternal interests, how frequently are the views of man limited to the concerns of the present moment! how does the smallest object near at hand entirely fill his eye! Immortal as I am, born for eternity, born to partake of the nature of the Saviour, and to participate in all the glories of the sons of God, I can now think, and feel, and suffer anxiety, only on one subject, the subject of my Lucy's happiness."

Thus I conversed with myself: and then turning, and looking round the room in which I stood, and thinking of the many many hours I had spent there with my little girl, my heart was overcome, and I wept like a stricken deer. And then I reproached myself, and called myself a fool, and asked myself what business I had to feel for other people's children in this way; and I tried to recollect that I was an old bachelor, and ought to be selfish. But all would not do: and I was at length compelled to take my hat, and hasten to

the parsonage; where I might at least have the comfort of meeting with others as irrational as myself.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEPARTURE OF THEODORE.

THIRTY days have passed since I wrote my last memorandum; and I have had no heart to write since. Our Theodore—our beautiful—our brave—is gone! My recollection flies from scenes of separation; scenes ever dim with the mists of sorrow. I could not endure to witness the parting between the father and the son, the sister and the brother, the lover and his beloved. I shut myself up in my own room, on the morning of his departure. I had sent him my parting letter, on the previous evening, and with it a sum which I had provided to purchase all he might require for the commencement of his military career. I mean to make an annual present of this sum. I have no children; and I

sometimes wish that I had no paternal feelings: yet who would really desire to be without such feelings?

I have had some unpleasant thoughts respecting Mrs. Winifred's motives in giving Theodore this commission. But we ought not to judge according to prejudice: and yet I cannot divest myself of these thoughts. There is a something in Mrs. Winifred's conduct which I cannot understand. There is, I am sure, some hidden motive of action in this lady, which, when once discovered, will explain multitudes of apparent contradictions. I think that I can thoroughly understand the two other old ladies. They are weak but straight-forward characters; and one may form some opinion how they are likely to act on any given occasion. But there are no conjectures to be made with respect to Mrs. Winifred; though I have for some time past had certain suspicions on my mind, to which, however, I will not give a form and consistency even on paper.

On the eventful morning, I stood at my window, and traced the doctor and his children, from the parsonage, walking slow-

ly across the park towards the road where their Theodore was to meet the coach. Theodore was talking with his father, and Eugenius followed with Sophia. Lucy, my sweet sad Lucy, met them at a little distance from the church. I saw Theodore rush forward to meet her; and I could look no longer. I returned to my chair. O, object of many tears! child of many prayers! our Theodore! may every blessing attend thy path!

We do not know the destination of our beloved one. He is at present an ensign, and is to join his regiment in the north of England: but should he be advanced to the rank of a lieutenant, which appointment Mrs. Winifred has promised to procure for him if her interest or money can succeed in obtaining it, we know not how soon the fortune of war may summon him to a distant country. I trust that he will not be called to India, where it is said that Captain Clive is already gone; a general combination of the natives being there expected against the Europeans.

I calculated the moment in which the

last agony of separation would take place, and then, growing restless, I walked out. My feet led me to the park, though my heart was with our gallant traveller. I soon attained the higher regions of the lawn, where the cawing of the rooks in the summits of the trees, together with other rural sounds, imparted some tranquillity to my mind. And here, amid these scenes of quiet beauty, the force of old associations operated so powerfully as to raise my thoughts from the depression of present feelings, to holy and happy meditations: or rather, my feelings became elevated, purified, and enlivened, by renewed considerations of the superintending care and the infinite wisdom of the Almighty.

I have been accustomed for years past to associate religious feelings with the contemplation of natural objects; whether I am employed in observing the harmony of the works of creation, or in remarking the wonderful manner in which all things visible are constituted types and shadows of things invisible and spiritual.

My views of the divine wisdom, and

of the benevolent consistency of the Creator as displayed in his works, together with my consciousness of the tender care which he continually exercises in behalf of his redeemed ones, at this moment administered an inconceivable comfort to my heart; and I presently found myself enabled to yield my Theodore, in faith and without anxiety, to his heavenly Father, to do with him as he might appoint. I had long observed the errors of his character; and it occurred to me, that the Almighty was probably employing a method to counteract those errors, directly opposite to those which we should have chosen, but certainly infinitely preferable in the eyes of Omniscience; and that this change in his state of life, would probably be the means of perfecting that character which had already so many valuable and noble points. The seed which falls beneath the parent tree, often decays within the influence of the shade from which it sprang; while that which is carried away by the birds of the air, is frequently dropped on some kindlier soil, and rises to beau-

tify and enrich some distant region. The Almighty works in an unseen way: yet who has ever trusted him and been confounded? Who has ever placed his treasure in the hand of Providence, and found it wanting in the day of account? "We will, in one solemn act then," I concluded, "commit our Theodore to the care of his heavenly Father. I will hasten to Dr. Beauchamp's: we will all assemble; and from this devout dedication we will derive our first dawn of comfort."

So saying, I hurried to the parsonage: and entering the study, I there found the dejected family assembled. "I am come, my friends," I said, "to unite with you in prayer. I cannot rest, till we have all, with one accord, knelt down, and committed our Theodore to God."

New bursts of tears, at this instant, relieved every heart. The doctor instantly entered into my intention: we knelt together; and the tender father leading the prayer, we, with one voice, united in supplicating the divine protection on our son, our brother, and our beloved. We then arose.

"You shall not leave me this day," said the doctor, "my friend, my Airley: you have already brought us consolation. But now come with me; I have need of your society. Come with me, and Eugenius will remain with his sisters."

The doctor then took his hat; and presently we found ourselves deep in the woods, where I endeavoured to engage the excellent man in such subjects of discourse as were most likely to interest him.

"I feel," said the doctor, "that my present trial has been necessary for me. Few men have enjoyed such an uninterrupted course of happiness as I have enjoyed for the last ten years; during the seven last of which my cup has been made to run over by the accession of your society, my friend: and, insensibly, I was beginning to cling to the gifts, and forget the Giver. This is not good for man. We must be reminded that this is not our home, nor our resting-place; but that we have a better abode above." And the good man looked upwards, with such a divine expression of submission, nay, of holy peace, that I

thought I never loved him more than at that moment.

Then, as if following his own train of thoughts, rather than contemplating any subject which had passed in conversation with me, he went on to this effect.

"I love to meditate," said he, "on the divine character, and to think *how completely, how wonderfully,* the two opposing (or seemingly opposing) attributes of mercy and justice have been reconciled by the death of Christ; whereby the strictness and severity of the divine justice have been deprived of all its terrors; and that which we once most feared has become the surest pledge of our eternal salvation.

"I can imagine, Mr. Airley," continued the holy man, "or, rather, it transcends the power of my imagination to conceive, the extent of that astonishment which must have seized the angels and hierarchies of heaven, and the rebel powers of hell, when first this mighty scheme, by which we are saved, was unfolded to their view. I can suppose that the blessed angels, aware of the perfection of the divine justice, had

given up our race as lost, and had already shed for us such tears as angels shed; and I can fancy Satan and his angels already exulting in the catastrophe, and rejoicing to find the Almighty perplexed, as it were, by his own perfections. But, behold, the holy commiseration of the higher class of beings, and the infernal triumphs of the lower, were at once transformed into wonder at the magnificent scheme for man's redemption, whereby the former captive is made more than a conqueror, and the numbers of the redeemed are made triumphantly to exceed the multitudes of the condemned.

"I love to think on these subjects, Mr. Airley," added the good man. "I love to meditate on those passages of Scripture, in which the ransomed of the Lord are likened to the sand of the sea, and the stars of heaven. The stars of heaven, indeed, appear comparatively few to the naked eye; and so seem the converted, in every society, to the judgment of unassisted man. But as the stars, beheld through the telescope, multiply to the eye beyond all computa-

tion, so with the eye of faith millions are discerned in a state of preparation for those new heavens where the righteous shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. And among these," he added, "will be our Theodore, for our God is rich in mercy and faithfulness; and though we may see our dear boy no more in the flesh, yet he, to whom we have committed him, will assuredly perfect that which concerneth him. And, my good friend, I can assure you, that the solemn act of this morning has been the channel of conveying more comfort to my soul, than I expected to receive for many days."

While thus conversing, we had seated ourselves on an eminence, where the trunk of a tree which had been blown down by the winds afforded a convenient resting-place, and commanded a view of some part of the shrubbery of the parsonage. From this position we now beheld Eugenius at a distance, walking between Lucy and Sophia, and turning first to one and then to the other, as if endeavouring to administer consolation.

"And there," said the doctor, pointing to

the lovely group, "and there, I could be anxious again. Tell me, Mr. Airley, is it required of me to separate Sophia and Eugenius?"

"Take no violent measures for that purpose," I answered; "but so arrange matters, if you can, that Eugenius shall not remain here unoccupied after the vacation. I then entered minutely into the subject of the young man's prospects, and repeated much of what I had said in the conference which I have already related as having taken place between me and the young gentleman himself.

The doctor coincided with me in my opinions, and we then proceeded to discourse about the ladies at the Hall; and Doctor Beauchamp agreed with me, that there was something inexplicable in the conduct of Mrs. Winifred, and in her continued coldness towards Eugenius.

"And yet," added he, "as Eugenius is the only male descendant of the Helmsley family, and his father would have been the next heir after the present ladies, we cannot doubt that he will inherit the estates."

While we were thus discoursing, several voices reached our ears, as of persons approaching; and we saw figures advancing along the wood walk, from which we had turned a little aside to the fallen tree on which we were seated.

"I say I never was more glad in my life," said a voice, which we recognized as that of David Nuttall.

"And why so, Sir?" was the rejoinder of his companion, who was no other than Miss Esther Stephens, now become a very smart young lady.

"Why, the fellow was such a plague and a bully too; but he's out of the way now, that's one comfort," was his answer. "But you say the badger has been seen?"

"Yes, Mr. David," she replied; "and he is to be hunted this evening, and Mr. Tolly is to come with his dogs."

"Ay," replied David, "that's well. Well, I'll be down by four o'clock, and bring my dogs too; but mind you don't begin afore I come. Though I don't know how I can come neither, because the old woman expects the Finchleys to-night, and

I shall be wanted to entertain the ladies; for Mr. Barnaby is got so thick with aunt Judy, that he is above sitting in the housekeeper's room now. However, I shall just shew her a good pair of heels, and leave Dummy to take my place."

By this time, the elegant pair had arrived within view of us, and Miss Esther blazed upon us in a hat adorned with cherry coloured streamers. As to Taffy, he was dressed in a kind of short jacket, having his hat cocked on one side, and his hair, which was decidedly red, tied in a club behind. Esther had burst into a loud laugh, and was just in the act of giving her companion a slap on the shoulder, which she said he deserved for speaking so disrespectfully of his aunt, when our solemn figures, seated on the fallen tree, attracted the eyes of both.

The manner of Mr. Nuttall instantly changed from what I imagined it to have been before, for he shrunk from the young lady, and said, roughly, "Keep your hands off, Miss, can't you? Don't you see the doctor?"

On this Miss Esther made something like a courtesy, and Taffy gave a nod to us, adding, "Fine morning, doctor: you have got a snug corner there?"

"How are the ladies, Mr. Nuttall?" asked the doctor, who was always polite.

"I have heard nothing of them to-day," replied David. And then, addressing Esther, he added in a lower tone, "I saw my aunt stirring up some sort of slop for Mrs. Judy this morning; so I suppose she is either sick or sad."

The doctor had shewn his civility; and he accordingly remained silent till the young folks had passed out of hearing.

"What poor David Nuttall's parents were I know not," said the doctor, "but I consider that gamekeeper and his wife to be two of the most unprincipled people in the whole parish. If that fine young girl is ruined, I shall blame the parents only. I have often, and often, admonished them respecting Esther. However, it shall be my first business, to-morrow, to warn them again of their danger, and thus to wash my hands of the consequences. Ah, Mr. Airley,

what would any of our young people have been, had they been brought up like this poor Esther Stephens, or that unhappy youth, David Nuttall?"

The good pastor spoke with so much tenderness, that I could not help calling myself to account for the unmingled and unchristianlike feeling of disgust at Taffy and his companion, which had but a moment before filled my breast. "Doctor Beauchamp," I said, "I am very glad that you preceded me in remarking upon that young pair."

"Why so?" enquired the doctor.

"Because, by so doing," I answered, "you have prevented me from giving utterance to an ill-natured spirit."

"When I detect myself in thinking unkindly," replied the doctor, "I often compel myself, by way of penitence, to speak kindly; though sometimes, I will confess, it goes sorely against my inclination to use this compulsion. But I remember, once, being much struck with a remark which I found, in some book, to this effect:—*'That it is not what we hear and see of others, but*

what we say of them, which makes us hate them.'"

"Very true," I replied; "and I wish that sentiment were engraven on my heart."

We now returned to the parsonage, where our evening passed more serenely than I could have hoped; but my Lucy quite overset me again, as we walked back together towards the Hall, by saying, "O, Mr. Airley, I am so sorry that this day is over."

"I cannot say I am, my Lucy dear," I replied.

"Ah, Sir!" she answered, "while this day lasted, I could still say, 'I saw Theodore this morning!' But, perhaps, it may be long, very long, before I can say those words again."

"My beloved Lucy," I replied, "we will endeavour to improve our time, and to allay our anxieties, by renewing our course of studies;—our reading, our drawing, our music. We will visit the school, and the poor people. And let us not forget, amid the regrets of separation, that we have committed our Theodore to God."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEATH-BED OF A CHRISTIAN.

In looking back on some of my earliest memorandums, after my first coming to Roxobel, I have been surprised at the gay and sprightly turn of my narratives; but now, how serious are the subjects on which I have to enlarge! Life, it has been well observed, is a chequered scene: it has its sunny glades, its shady groves, its briery coppices, its marshy and dank valleys, its craggy steeps, its breezy downs, its sandy wastes. Yet, amid all this diversity, is there not one bright, one glorious, one never changing prospect, extended before the eye of him who walks by faith, and shining through the mists of sin and sorrow which sometimes rise between the traveller and his goal!

This morning, being that which followed the departure of my Theodore, while at breakfast, I received a message from Mrs. Goodwill, requesting me to call upon her some time during the day.

The evenings are now closing in; I therefore resolved to set out after my dinner, and engaged my dear Lucy to accompany me, with the double motive of enjoying her society and diverting her attention; diverting, I mean, in the original sense of the word, which is merely changing a course.

We spent our morning in study; and at three o'clock my beloved Lucy sent me word that she was waiting at my door.

On going down, I found her in conversation with Mr. Barnaby Semple, who informed us that we should probably find the excellent Mrs. Goodwill at extremity. "She is past all aid of medicine," he said, "and will soon be beyond the reach of all earthly evils."

It was impossible for Miss Lucy and me so to rouse ourselves as to be by any means lively during our walk. Yet we seemed

to enjoy each other's society; and Lucy more than once expressed herself as most happy in having me for her friend.

"We derive this advantage, Miss Lovel," I replied, "from what I once thought my misfortune, the circumstance of my being separated from all my former friends, and being thrown on the kindness of the good people at Roxobel. Thus good is perpetually derived from apparent evil, through the infinite mercy of Almighty God."

"Sir," continued Lucy, "I used to indulge myself in the thought of having a house, and furnishing apartments for you; but now I dare not entertain these hopes any longer."

"Well then, my dear child, we will not entertain them," I answered. "It is perhaps never right to indulge in dreams of this kind. He builds too low, who builds his hopes beneath the skies. Let us then be chiefly anxious respecting the present that we may know how to profit best by it, and respecting the future only as it is connected with our interests in another world. Behold the various exquisite scenes which open before our eyes as we proceed in our

walk. Look at that path which winds before us till it is lost in shade. See how beautifully its borders are diversified with plants of every tint and every form. Mark how the light breaks in from above, and how it trembles among the leaves. Listen to the note of the wood-pigeon, the distant lowing of the cattle, and the bark of the watch-dog. How beautiful, how delightful, is this scene, and its attendant circumstances! Yet all on earth is changeable. The yellow tints of autumn have already begun to discolour the leaves; the winds will speedily lay these leaves in the dust; and the whole face of nature will soon be veiled in the snowy mantle of winter. All these circumstances, therefore, all these changes, even to the falling of a leaf, ought to be received by us as so many warnings not to rest in present scenes, but to press forward towards those which are eternal. And although there is nothing in this sentiment which has not been repeated a thousand and a thousand times; yet I believe that it cannot be too often repeated, nor too deeply felt."

"Sir," remarked Lucy, "every thing looks very different to me from what it did a few weeks since; but I will try not to think so much of myself and of my own concerns. I know this selfishness is wrong. I know it makes me miserable. I will endeavour, with the divine help, to think less of self than I have done. What can I do to make myself less disagreeable to my companions?"

"You are not disagreeable," I answered, though unable to suppress a smile at the expression: "I never found you so. But I believe that the best way to make ourselves agreeable, is to think as little as we possibly can of ourselves, and of our own feelings, and to devote our energies as much as in us lies to the good of others."

"Then," said Lucy, "I will begin to-morrow. My aunt Judy is ill. They say she is nervous, and even ill-tempered: but I will force myself to go every morning and wait upon her, and give her lap-dog his breakfast, though I cordially abhor that little thing, I must confess. I will try to divert my mind from myself in this

way. My poor aunt Judy is a great sufferer. And is it not good, Mr. Airley, when we are unhappy, to sympathize in the sufferings of those who are more severely tried than we are? My aunt Judy," continued Lucy, "always rises and goes into the brown parlour before it is time to come to you in the library: therefore my attentions to her, in her own apartment, will not interfere with my studies with you."

"I will candidly say, my dear Miss Lovel," I replied, "that I never thought you particularly troubled with selfishness. Nevertheless, if you now feel more than usually inclined to be occupied by your own feelings, I certainly think that you cannot do better than what you propose. Let your heart know at once that it is not to be indulged; and it will, with help from above, learn to be a good child, and submit to your will."

"Sir," replied Lucy, "I have heard many people say of me and of Sophia, 'What good young ladies Miss Lovel and Miss Beauchamp are! How amiable it is in them to visit the poor, and treat all ranks

with affability!' There may be some merit, humanly speaking, in Sophia when she does these things, because she is naturally reserved. But, for my part, I love to be here and there and every where. I am sociable from disposition; and I find it to be a very great amusement to be busy among the poor. There is therefore no sort of merit in these things, as far as I am concerned. I mean, of course, comparative merit; for I am aware, that there cannot be any absolute merit even in our best performances. But, on the other hand, to sit for two hours every morning on the corner of aunt Judy's bed, hearing her talk of her lap-dog and of Mr. Barnaby Semple, or reading the Whole Duty of Man, and Nelson's Fasts and Festivals; these are unpleasant duties: and I am resolved, in order to mortify self, that I will undertake them."

"I am glad, Miss Lovel," I remarked, "that you have no notion of obtaining merit to yourself, by this sort of penance. You are not going to turn papist."

"No, I hope not, Sir," rejoined Miss Lovel. "I have not been so taught. I

know that there is no name by which any one can be saved, excepting that of our Lord Jesus Christ. It would be worse than foolish, were I to take any merit to myself for any thing which I could do. Be assured, Mr. Airley, that I have no such presumptuous thought. But I feel that I must make some effort, the Almighty helping me, to change the course of my ideas: and I hope to begin to-morrow morning, and to carry up aunt Judy's chocolate, and take my breakfast by her side."

I approved of this determination, but asked Miss Lovel if there might not be a possibility of making Mrs. Judy's maid somewhat jealous.

Miss Lovel assured me that there was no danger of that kind. On which I replied, "Well, then, your path is perfectly straight and smooth; and I entirely approve of your purpose."

This subject was then dismissed, and Lucy said, "I should like to know where Theodore now is, Mr. Airley."

We were by this time arrived at the edge of the wood, and saw the

Rock Hamlet directly before us, across the valley.

"Do you remember our first visit all together to this place, Mr. Airley?" asked Lucy. "How joyful we then were! We had no thought then of our separation from Theodore. We were like four children of one happy family. Surely, there never were any children so happy as we then were!"

We now descended into the vale, and, crossing the stream, had the Rock, as it were, hanging over our heads. A poor cottager met us as we were about to ascend, of whom we enquired respecting Mrs. Goodwill. "Ah, Sir!" she replied, "she draws near her end, and, poor soul, she has been calling for you all the day. I hope you will be with her in time."

"What!" I asked; "is death so near?"

"Yes," she replied; "Dr. Beauchamp was with her about noon, and gave her the sacrament; and they had such a parting, they say, as would have cut your heart to have seen it: and the poor gentleman was all in tears when he came down the Rock by my door. Ah, Sir, he is the father of

us all. Heaven send he may long be spared to us. He is, indeed, the poor man's friend."

We now began to ascend the hill, and, passing by Master Peter's garden, he called to us, saying, "Sir, I have been looking out for you all the evening; for it has been a pity to hear the poor creature call for you. I myself have been a dozen times at the edge of the Rock on the look out."

On hearing this we hastened on, and Peter shut his door and followed us.

Mrs. Goodwill's cottage is pleasantly situated, being shaded on the north by the Rock, and having before it a little green ledge, covered with wild shrubs. The door of the house and the windows above were open. We entered the kitchen, and Peter, going to the foot of a narrow staircase, called to the persons above, to inform them that we were arrived. Mary Grosvenor, Mrs. Goodwill's daughter, came down immediately. She was neatly dressed, and had my godson, an infant a few months old, in her arms. This poor woman had that sort of placidly or rather stupidly

resigned expression, which we not unfrequently may observe in persons who, without any naturally strong feelings, have been subjected to various kinds of affliction. She expressed a degree of pleasure at seeing us, and invited us up stairs. We accordingly followed her, and entered into a tolerably spacious room, which, though humble in its appearance, was yet extremely neat.

On a bed, the linen of which appeared delicately clean, lay the dying woman. She was supported on pillows. Her eyes were closed, and she was in a sort of dose; though she looked rather like one dead than asleep. By the side of the bed sat the excellent Mrs. Tristram, who scarcely raised her eyes from the dying woman to acknowledge our entrance. The pretty Ellen was kneeling at the foot of the bed, but rose as we came in, displaying features bathed in tears. There was also an elderly neighbour in the room, seated on the side of the bed, opposite to Mrs. Tristram. I made a sign that no one should stir; and Lucy and I seated ourselves on chairs, which were

so placed that we could observe the motions of the dying person.

There is something most awful in the contemplation of the expiring efforts which are made by nature to detain the parting soul, and the convulsive struggles of our mortal part in the moments previous to its separation from that which animated it. When and where is it that we are made so sensible of the dreadful nature of sin, as at the hour of dissolution, and in the chamber of death?—and yet, where are we made to apprehend so sensibly the effects of that redeeming love whereby death is disarmed of its sting, and made the gate of everlasting happiness?

We sat, it might be, more than half an hour in the situation which I have described, without speaking or moving; and, during that period many were the thoughts which passed through my mind, rapidly and distinctly reviving the recollection of those acts of kindness which were shewn me by the excellent Mrs. Goodwill, during my illness, on my first arrival at Roxobel. The various changes, too, which had taken

place in our little society since that period, vividly recurred to my remembrance.

At length, the dying woman started, and sighed, and opened her eyes. We all instantly arose, and surrounded her bed. She seemed, however, to be utterly insensible to what was passing around her for a considerable time. At the first appearance of returning consciousness, Mrs. Tristram said, "Here is Mr. Airley, dear Mrs. Goodwill; your friend, Mr. Airley."

"Where?" asked the poor woman. "Come near, good Sir." And she held out her hand to me.

I approached the head of the bed, and she continued to address me; but her voice was hollow and sepulchral. "Mr. Airley, kind Sir," she said, bringing out her words with much difficulty, and with frequent pauses, "I have ventured to send for you to claim your promise. Come here, Ellen, love, and kneel down; and, before you receive my last blessing, tell Mr. Airley that you will be guided by him through life, and that you will never marry or take any important step without

consulting him: and so, my child, may the divine blessing descend abundantly on your head."

Ellen knelt as directed, and, looking at me, said, though not without many sobs, "Mr. Airley, I will obey you, and I will ask your advice, and will try to please you. And may God help and be with me."

"And may God," I added, "give me grace to give you no advice, dear Ellen, but such as a Christian father ought to give. Mrs. Goodwill, rest assured that I shall hold myself bound, by this solemn act, to watch over your child as a father ought to do. And, as I have pledged myself for Ellen, so shall I consider myself bound for my little godson, to promote his welfare in that state of life in which it has pleased God to place him."

"Bless you, Sir," said Mrs. Goodwill; "and now I shall depart in peace. And yet I have something more to say. You will continue to watch over dear Miss Lucy—my sweet Miss Lucy? Will you not, Sir?"

At the sound of her name Lucy sprang

forward, and sunk on her knees by the weeping Ellen. "My nurse! my friend! my mother!" she exclaimed. "And do you remember your Lucy now, in this hour? Bless me, Mrs. Goodwill. Bless your two daughters together. Bless us with your dying voice."

The poor sufferer was so roused and excited by this address, that she actually raised herself up, while her glassy eyes assumed a supernatural lustre. She embraced each of the lovely young women by turns, and then, falling back on her pillow, totally exhausted, she exclaimed, "And now, my Saviour; now, now I am ——"

We heard no more, for her voice became inaudible; and her eyes, the next moment, were raised in that fixed and awful manner, which betokens the almost immediate departure of the soul.

Lucy and Ellen, to whom this solemn sight was entirely new, had risen, on observing the change of countenance which so suddenly took place in the dying woman, and stood fixed in silent awe by the

side of the bed; and not a sound was heard in the chamber, excepting the slow, deep, and difficult respirations of the dying person.

The shades of evening were approaching: but just at the moment in which the sun was dipping his disk beneath the horizon, a sudden glare shot into the room, and a strong light shed itself on the head of the expiring female.

At that instant, she uttered a cry, and we distinguished these words: "I come, my Saviour; I come."

For a minute or more, we all kept our places in breathless silence. At length, the voice of Peter, who had entered the room unobserved, convinced us that it was death, and not sleep, which we had witnessed.

"We have nothing now to do," observed the old man, "but to thank God, and to pray that our deaths may resemble this."

"Her Saviour was indeed at hand," I answered. "Who knows what glorious vision presented itself but now to mortal eyes, in this humble chamber?"

Mrs. Tristram, and the old neighbour whom I have before mentioned, now lowered the head of the corpse and closed the eyes and mouth; and Lucy, having impressed one parting kiss on its forehead, descended with me into the lower room, where I had some conversation with Peter respecting the funeral, for I had made up my mind that it should be performed at my own expence.

Peter, who is a very upright character though a singular one, took upon him the management of every thing; and I particularly desired that each of the bearers might have a complete suit of grey cloth and a Bible, and that Mrs. Grosvenor and her family might be put into decent mourning. I also signified my intention of attending the funeral from the village to the church; and expressed a wish that it might take place on the following Sunday afternoon.

Having made these arrangements, which occupied much more of my time than I had expected, we turned towards home. Peter attended us till we had crossed the brook: and we then set forward in all

haste; but we found it exceedingly dark when arrived within the shade of the woods.

We passed on speedily, but, coming to a place where several little paths intersected each other, we unfortunately took the wrong one, and did not perceive our mistake till we came to an opening in the wood, where the hills on the other side of the river became visible in the moonbeams.

"We must turn again," said Lucy. "We are quite out of our way."

We instantly turned round, but were presently aware of voices behind us, approaching very rapidly. They were men's voices, and sounded as if in high mirth.

"Miss Lucy," I said, "I don't relish this sort of company. Pray strike into that little path, and give them an opportunity of passing without observing us.

We lost not a moment, but found the path so intertangled that we could not advance. We accordingly stood still; and the persons whose voices we had heard passed very near us, though they did not

see us, so effectually were we concealed in the depth of the shade.

"It is David Nuttall," whispered Lucy.

I made no answer, for they were so near at hand that we could distinguish all they said; and I was therefore apprehensive that our voices also might be heard.

"I say, Mr. Nuttall," observed his companion, in whose voice I recognized the miller, "the thing don't appear to me so difficult, neither. But this is not the time. Wait a bit, till some of the old ones are out of the way. Mr. Barnaby will soon finish with one of them, I reckon."

"Nay, nay," replied Taffy: "you know that cats have nine lives. But do you think that Black Tom is of a sort to be trusted?"

We could hear no more, for the two worthies had passed on. And we accordingly came out from the intertangled pathway, and endeavoured to recover the right direction as quickly as possible.

"What are those two companions in mischief plotting now?" asked Lucy.

"It is impossible to say," I replied;

"but they shall be watched. There is a mystery about this David Nuttall which I cannot understand: yet I wish I had earlier tried what kindness would have done with him. I feel that I ought to have tried him long since in that way. My conscience has smitten me respecting him before this time, I assure you, my dear Miss Lovel."

"And mine, too," replied Lucy, with her accustomed sweetness. "But my dear Theodore always put himself into a passion whenever I uttered a word in David's favour, or expressed any pity for him. And thus he almost persuaded me that it was my duty to hate the young man."

"Well," I rejoined, "I would not recommend hatred, my dear Miss Lucy. Let us live and die, with the divine help, without encouraging any such feeling. But, upon the whole, I would advise you to have as little intercourse with him as possible. He is quite beyond the reach of your influence at present."

The sound of another step, and of another voice, now reached our ears. But

before we had had a moment for encouraging any further apprehensions, we recognized Eugenius, whom we were never more pleased to meet. He took the lady on one side, and the little man on the other; and we arrived at the village without further alarm.

CHAPTER IX.

Dated a few days after the former.

LAST Sunday afternoon we committed to the dust the remains of one of my first friends in Roxobel, the excellent Mrs. Goodwill. Many persons attended, some of whom came from a distance; for the good people of the neighbourhood of Roxobel are fond of public spectacles, and some of them are not very particular respecting the occasion which calls them together.

There is nothing more painful than to be suddenly excited to laughter while suffering under the pressure of sorrowful feelings: and this was my case on the occasion of dear Mrs. Goodwill's interment. Having been warned of the approach of the funeral party,

by Mrs. Strickland, who had dressed herself in decent mourning for the occasion, I was just preparing to join it, and, for that purpose, had stepped to the window-seat for my prayer-book, when my eye fell upon the figure of the Widow Watchum, who had just alighted from her horse, upon a heap of gravel, which was laid in readiness for repairing the road between the village and the church, and who was now in the act of shaking off her safeguard or riding-petticoat, in order that she might display her black gown to better advantage.

I turned from the window, with a motion which made Mrs. Strickland start and exclaim, "Is the funeral in sight, Sir?"

"No," I answered: "but that foolish old woman Watchum is come; and there she is in the park, shaking herself into order as usual. Are all occasions the same to her?"

"I believe that they are, Sir," replied Mrs. Strickland. "Any where, where people are met together, and there is any thing to be seen, there she must be."

"Well, but what is to be seen now, Mrs. Strickland?"

"O, Sir," she replied, "your goodness to poor Mrs. Goodwill has been much talked of, and the church will be very much crowded this afternoon, I have no doubt. Mr. and Mrs. Claypole dined in Roxobel to-day, in order that they might be present."

"Well," I said, "I am so far glad, because I know that the doctor means to give us a funeral sermon: otherwise, Mrs. Strickland, I should be much hurt at the light spirit which people betray on occasions of this kind."

I had no time for further discourse; but hastening down stairs, I joined the procession in the street, taking a place which had been left for me by the side of farmer Taylor. I was pleased by the exact manner in which Peter had executed my commands, and was much affected by the sight of Ellen and her mother, the latter carrying her little infant immediately behind the coffin.

As we entered the park, Lucy and So-

phia, both in mourning, joined the procession, and placed themselves immediately behind the female relations; and when I considered that Mrs. Goodwill's father had been rector of the parish, I thought that this was only a proper tribute of respect: although I could not forbear saying to myself, "Surely, there is a sort of simple affection and tenderness displayed among our good people at Roxobel, which we do not often meet with in other parts of the world!"

We found the churchyard crowded. The doctor preceded the coffin into the church, according to the usual custom, and it was placed in the centre aisle, till the evening prayers were concluded; after which the excellent pastor addressed us in a style so tender, so eloquent, so truly scriptural, that I trust many who came there only to stare returned to pray. The body was then committed to the dust, not without many tears; the Bibles were given to the bearers; and, when all was over, it was most affecting to me to see the disconsolate family—the daughter and granddaughter—

bearing the infant Henry with them, and turning their steps towards that home where they were never more to enjoy the society of their beloved relative.

After the service, the doctor took me by the arm, and insisted that I should spend the remainder of the evening at the parsonage. He there shewed me a letter from our dear Theodore, which, however, contained little more than expressions of affection, as, when the letter was written, he had not as yet reached his regiment.

The next day, after dinner, I adopted the resolution of walking towards Boroughtown and the Warrener's Tower, with a view of reconnoitering the country. Miss Lucy had told me that she was going in that direction this same evening, in company with Sophia, and added, "Should you happen, Sir, to come the same way, you may probably meet us on our return."

This was a hint not to be neglected. I accordingly set off and went to the Tower, but found the door shut, and no one at home. I then left the Hill, and walked through Boroughtown, into the

Gipsy's Wood; but seeing no person I knew, and finding that it was nearly five o'clock, I hastened towards the park, and re-entered it over a style near a beech wood, where I expected to meet the young ladies. Having pursued the path, which was a winding one, for some distance, I suddenly came to an opening, and descried Lucy and Sophia before me, accompanied by the gipsy wife, who, though I have not mentioned her lately, is never, I have reason to think, very far from Roxobel.

The gipsy was talking with great volubility to the young ladies, for I heard her voice before I saw her ragged cloak. I was very near to the party before they were aware of my approach; and I accordingly caught the following dialogue.

"And why, my pretty lady, will you not let me tell you the fine things which fortune has in store for you?—lands and houses, and a husband as handsome as the sun in his splendour."

"I don't want your lands and lordships," replied Miss Lucy, with her accustomed cheerfulness, or, rather, with a certain de-

gree of recovered cheerfulness. "If you would assure me that when I am married, I shall have no house at all, but shall live in something a little like your encampment in the wood, I might, perhaps, be persuaded to listen to you; but I want none of your fine palaces."

"What!" exclaimed the gipsy, "such a pretty lady as you to live in a wood, and under a tattered curtain? The stars forbid. No, no, sweet lady; better things are prepared for you; fine halls and woods, and children with golden hair, all as beautiful as their noble father."

"Golden hair!" cried Lucy. "But perhaps I don't like golden hair. The finest hair has not a yellow tinge, Nelly."

I now advanced, and looking sternly at the witch, and shaking my little cane, "How now?" I exclaimed. "Away with thee; aroint thee, woman; or I will make thee feel my power." And turning to Miss Lucy, I said, "Why do you hold discourse with this woman, Miss Lovel? This is not a proper person to jest with."

Lucy coloured, for I had spoken more

sharply than I intended; and coming up close to me, with the tears in her eyes, "Are you angry, dear Mr. Airley?" she asked.

"No, my dear Miss Lucy," I replied; "but you should always silence these people at once, and never enter into discourse with them."

"Well, then, another time I will," said the sweet young lady; "only don't be angry. I will do all you wish. I know I was wrong; but I did not think about it. And yet, Sophia, you did tell me not to answer her."

"I have a great mind to say that you young ladies shall never again walk so far together, without some gentleman," I said.

I had scarcely uttered this sentence, when a voice from behind us, (for I had stepped in between the young ladies,) put in the following words: "And if the ladies should want company at any time, I shall be most happy to give them mine;"—and so saying, the speaker stepped forward, and presented the figure of Mr. Nuttall.

We were all so much astonished at this apparition, that we were unable to find

words to reply; on which the young man added, "You are a happy man, Mr. Airley; a very happy man."

"As happy as most men, Sir," I replied, somewhat coldly.

"I think you must deliver one of these young ladies to me," added the forward youth. "Miss Lovel, will you take my arm?"

"No, Mr. Nuttall," she answered; "to be plain with you, I will not. I wish you well from my whole heart. I am sorry if I have ever been cross or unkind to you; but I never mean to be more intimate with you than I now am: and if you keep at a proper distance, I will always be your friend."

"Indeed, Miss," replied David, "you are very plain spoken!"—and he reddened up to his brow.

"I don't mean to be unkind," she rejoined, with her usual calmness; "and I again say, that I am sorry if ever I have been so: but I am determined never to walk with you, or to be seen in your company; at least, by my own consent."

The young man looked very insolently, and said, "I suppose you don't think me your equal?"

"Mr. Nuttall," I said, "you had better not press this matter further, or you will compel the young lady to say something impolite. It has pleased the Almighty, my dear Sir, to appoint different ranks in society; and every person is respectable who acts with propriety in his own sphere. As a friend to both of you—to Miss Lovel and to you, Mr. Nuttall—I would advise, that neither the one nor the other should attempt to step out of their places. True dignity is closely connected with contentment; and, to be sincere with you, I think that you are equally as unfriendly to yourself when you seek that society which is above you, as you are when you frequent that which is below you. Indeed, my dear young friend, I have often been sorry to see you with some of the least respectable characters in Roxobel."

"Whom do you mean, Sir?" asked David.

I was silent.

"And you think, Sir," proceeded the young man, "that Miss Lovel would degrade herself as much in walking with me, as I do in associating with those people whom you speak of?"

"I mean no rudeness, Mr. Nuttall," I replied.

"Don't you, Sir?" he said. "Then I should say, you don't much understand what good manners are."

"Well, Sir," I rejoined, "I am sorry for it: but I repeat that I meant no offence. And, if you please, Sir, we will now say good evening." So saying, I bowed, but, I trust, not superciliously, and walked on.

Mr. Nuttall stood still, folded his arms, returned the bow, and, looking hard at Miss Lucy, added, "I wish you a good evening, Miss Lovel; I am sorry that you should think me so greatly your inferior."

I drew the young ladies on as rapidly as I could; for I perceived that even the gentle Sophia was very angry. But I could only restrain them till we were too far off for David to hear them: and then they both gave utterance to their suppressed

feelings; and Lucy declared, that she would go that very evening, and tell Mrs. Winifred of Taffy's impertinence.

I hardly knew what advice to give; but, knowing the placable temper of the young lady, I turned the conversation to another subject, asking Miss Lovel how she proceeded with Mrs. Judy.

On this question, the storm on her lovely brow passed away, as I had expected, and she began to smile. "O, Mr. Airley," she replied, "never was any thing better! The first day, when I took up the chocolate, (for I went down myself to fetch it, before her maid was aware of what I meant to do,) she raised herself in her bed, and exclaimed, 'What? how? who?' and called Susan, and asked what was the matter, and hoped, and wished, and did not finish a sentence.

"So then," continued Lucy, "I said, 'Aunt Judy, I mean to come every morning to breakfast with you; and you shall not say "No," for I am determined. Mrs. Susan, you won't be angry?'

"'Me, dear Miss!' replied the maid,

good-humouredly; 'nothing will please me better.' And she placed a table by the bed, and brought up my breakfast. And Mrs. Judy looked so pleased, and told me all the history of her complaints: for you know, Mr. Airley, that that is the subject on which she expatiates whenever she is more than usually complacent. So when the breakfast was taken away, I said to my aunt that this was my Bible-reading hour; and I added, 'Why should I not read it aloud to you, dear aunt, while Susan is at breakfast? and then I can pray by you; and you will be ready to get up as soon as the breakfast is over in Mrs. Nuttall's room?'

"'I am afraid it will tire you, my dear?' said my poor aunt, in a kind voice.

"'No,' I answered, 'I can read aloud many hours, and I shall like to read to you; and we will begin the Bible, if you please, and read two chapters in the New Testament, and two in the Old.'

"I accordingly read, and interrupted myself now and then to say something in explanation of what I read; and my

poor aunt seemed very much pleased, though she said but little. So, when Susan came back, I took my leave. But I was not quite sure, till the next day, how my visit had been thought of, for aunt Judy said nothing about it while we were at dinner.

"However, the next morning, having had a long walk the night before, I rose rather later; and was only just dressed when I heard a tap at my door. It was Susan, and she came to ask me where I intended to breakfast.

"'Has my aunt enquired for me?' I said.

"'No, Miss Lucy,' replied Susan; 'but she ordered me to set your chair where it was yesterday, where, she said, she could see you while you were reading. But she did not bid me call you.'

"'O,' I said, 'that is enough;' and I accordingly hastened to the room. And aunt Judy said, 'Good morning, my dear: Susan, fetch the breakfast.'

"Then I sat down, and told her about my walk, and the persons I had seen; and made a long story of it: and while I was

thus attempting to amuse her, she sat up in bed sipping her chocolate; and though her countenance expressed but little, I was sure that she enjoyed herself. Then, after Susan had cleared away the breakfast, the dear lady took out an embossed golden tweezer-case, which I am sure is a hundred years old, and begged me to accept it.

"'No, aunt,' I replied, 'I am much obliged to you, but I will not receive your kind present—not, at least, till we have finished the Bible together. And now, dear aunt, please to understand me: I do not want any thing from you, either now or hereafter, but your affection and your blessing. The blessing of our parents is more precious than gold or silver; and so you shall give me your blessing, and not your gold. I have enough of that metal already. And if, in addition to that, you will but be kind to my brother, pray, never mind me. I will not have any thing but your blessing.' And so saying, I knelt by the bed, and kissed her hand. And she put out her dear arms, and embraced me; and my cheeks were wet with her tears.

And I really could not help weeping myself. But I would not receive the tweezer-case, but positively declined accepting it till we shall have finished the Bible. 'I will have it then, dear aunt,' I said; 'and keep it in remembrance of our happy breakfasts.'

"After this, I read again, and my aunt asked me several questions while I was reading, and remarked that she wished she was as sure of heaven as Mrs. Goodwill was. So I then endeavoured to explain the nature of the great work of our salvation, and to shew that our eternal safety and happiness depends altogether upon the merits and intercession of our Saviour; but I don't think my aunt understood me. However, this was a happy breakfasting. But at dinner to-day, which is the second day of my morning visits, my aunt Judy told my other aunts of my daily attendance on her; and Mrs. Winifred said, 'Lucy, you should come to me sometimes as well as to your aunt Judy.' And my aunt Judy said, 'No, no; she is engaged to me now, and you cannot have her.' But I did not speak one

word; though I will continue to attend on my aunt Judy, I am determined."

"Do so, my dear Miss Lucy," I replied; "but avoid disputes, if you can."

"I have often thought," remarked Sophia, "that we sometimes find most happiness in those occupations from which we have expected least; and, in accordance with this opinion, Lucy has found great pleasure in these visits which she expected would be attended only with dull and unpleasant circumstances."

"Why, to be sure," rejoined Lucy, smiling, "there are some unpleasant circumstances attendant on these breakfastings, for Chloe's eyes are always washed and anointed during our meal; but I am determined not to mind trifles. I would rather have Chloe in the room than Mrs. Nuttall: for if poor Chloe has two eyes wherewith to annoy her friends, the housekeeper has at least a hundred, all of which are never asleep at one time, and some of which are as sharp sighted as those of the man who could see the grass grow."

Such was the discourse with which we passed the time till we arrived at the harbour of peace, namely, the lovely dwelling of Dr. Beauchamp.

CHAPTER X.

TEA-DRINKING AT THE HALL.

I WAS this morning reading a newspaper in the library at the Hall, in which I found an account of some disturbances in Bengal, accompanied with some hints that government was preparing to send out forces into that quarter. I am now interested in public news, on account of our Theodore: but I trust India will not be his destination. This day also, we were gratified in receiving another letter from our dear boy: he is now with his regiment, which is quartered in the north, and he speaks with rapture of a military life, though as yet he knows little respecting it, excepting the brilliant exterior. He informs us, that he is having his miniature taken, representing him in full uniform.

This will, indeed, be a treasure to us. While reading this part of the letter, the enquiry suggested itself, "May not this portrait be all that we may ever see of our Theodore?" The thought was replete with sadness. I therefore put the letter, which had been sent to my lodgings for my inspection, into my pocket, and walked out to enquire after Ellen and her mother at the Rock Hamlet, and to settle some accounts with Master Peter.

I found Ellen dwelling with her parents in Mrs. Goodwill's former habitation, and I directed her to do some needlework for me, in order that she might have an occupation. I commended her for the neatness of her dress, and lent her some books, desiring that she would continue to practise her writing. I also enquired into the wants of the family. Ellen informed me, with tears, that her stepfather is still conducting himself very unkindly towards her mother.

On my return, I was told that Mr. Lovel was waiting for me in great anxiety. I accordingly hastened up stairs, and found

the young gentleman in considerable trouble.

"I have been sent for to the Hall," said he, "and have replied, that I would attend the ladies about six o'clock. My sister has reason to believe, that I am to be questioned this evening on several subjects of importance. Mr. Airley, you must go with me."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed; "I cannot, must not, intrude."

The young man, however, pleaded so hard with me, that I at length consented, and we accordingly proceeded to the Hall.

We were admitted as usual by Mr. Porter, and were conducted, with the customary solemnity, to the oak parlour, where we found the three ladies seated in form, each with her knotting-bag and shuttle. There were four wax lights burning on the polished table, in silver candlesticks, and a blazing fire was kindled on the hearth, before which lay two lap-dogs, on a rug. I had been a little apprehensive concerning my reception, but was glad to find my privileges so extensive; for here,

as elsewhere, it appeared as if it had been determined with one consent that I was never to be considered as an intruder. Mr. Porter hastened to set us chairs; and Mrs. Winifred desired that tea might be brought in immediately, saying, "You have not yet taken tea, I presume, Mr. Airley;" and adding, "we wish that you would oftener do us the honour of a visit."

In answer to this polite address, I bowed, and made a pretty speech.

Eugenius is naturally reserved, and this reserve often gives him the appearance of pride. Had he a little of his sister's innocent unapprehensiveness, I am convinced, that he would gain favour with his aunts much more rapidly. This particular trait forms the principal difference between the characters of the two young people; for Lucy has no kind of ambition, and seems to place a lower value upon earthly possessions than any human being with whom I ever met, excepting perhaps Dr. Beauchamp. Even when Lucy was a child, if money were given to her, she seemed to have no other anxiety, than to know in

what way she could spend it so as to promote the happiness of others. And of this I am assured, that there is nothing which bestows such dignity, such ease, such real grace, on the manners, as the entire absence of ambitious and selfish views of every description. I must allow that the situation of Eugenius is a trying one; and it remains to be proved how he will conduct himself through it. May the divine assistance be granted him!

While sipping our tea, which we took with all possible formality, I exerted myself to the utmost to enliven the conversation; and with this view, I referred to some of my former adventures, before I had known my dear friends at Roxobel. Among other stories, I related the history of my visit to Snowdon, where I had enacted the part of the knight of the blue mantle; and this ludicrous relation appeared to afford much merriment to the two younger Mrs. Helmsleys, who chuckled a good deal at my description of brother Tim, though I did not exaggerate, but expatiated chiefly on my own ridiculous figure in the market-

cloak. Yet I could not, by any exertion I could make, succeed in amusing Mrs. Winifred; from which circumstance I augured no good to poor Eugenius, and was accordingly prepared for much that was to follow after tea.

At length, when the tea-things were removed, the fire supplied, and the hearth swept, the door shut, and the last sound of retreating footsteps had died away on the attentive ear, Mrs. Winifred hemmed twice, and then said, "Nephew Lovel, I have sent for you to speak to you respecting your intentions."

"Respecting your intentions," repeated Mrs. Grizzy.

"Your intentions," re-echoed Mrs. Judy.

It must be observed, that, on solemn occasions, like the present, these two last ladies are always particularly disposed to use these repetitions.

"Respecting our rector's daughter," continued Mrs. Winifred, "Miss Sophia Beauchamp."

"Miss Sophia Beauchamp," reiterated Mrs. Grizzy.

"Beauchamp," said Mrs. Judy.

Mrs. Winifred proceeded. "Sophia Beauchamp," she said, "is a lovely young woman, and it would be cruel in you, Eugenius, to trifle with her feelings; but she is absolutely without fortune, and if you marry her, how are you to support yourself, according to the rank in which you were born?"

"The rank in which you were born," said Mrs. Grizzy.

"In which you were born," said Mrs. Judy.

"You have a right," observed Mrs. Winifred, "to aspire to a much higher match than the daughter of a poor rector. And, to be very plain with you, Eugenius, I do not approve of these projected connexions with the Beauchamps, neither in your own case, nor in that of your sister's. Although my father lowered himself in his second marriage, yet you are well aware that your father was our nearest relation, being, by the female line, descended from my mother's father's only sister; my grandfather and your great-grandmother being the

children of Sir Craddock Helmsley, knight, who possessed the lands of Helmsley and Roxobel, in right of his father and great grandfather; the former of whom was a general in the Parliament army, and a man of approved honour and valour, the intimate friend of the Lord Protector. And this is what I have been trying, for the last ten years, to beat into the head of your sister Lucy. But it has been all in vain, as you well know, sister Grizzy; for it was only yesterday afternoon, as we were rising from table, after talking upon this subject, that she pointed to the picture of General Helmsley over the dining-room chimney-piece, and said, 'Good by, Sir Craddock.'"

"Yes," said Mrs. Grizzy, "she said, 'Good by, Sir Craddock.'"

"'Good by, Sir Craddock,'" added the last echo. And all three sisters at once shook their wise heads, and looked fixedly at me, as if assured of my sympathy in their distress.

I have often wished that our good friends at Roxobel were not quite so ridiculous; for they certainly succeed better in min-

gling the ludicrous with the serious, than any people with whom I ever met. Upon the present occasion, uneasy as I felt respecting Mr. Lovel, and much as risibility was out of time and place, I was seized with such a violent inclination to laugh, that I was obliged to take out my silk handkerchief, and bury my face in its ample folds: and as very absurd people are seldom aware of their own absurdities, my manœuvre was not suspected.

Eugenius, I saw, was resolved to be as silent as possible; and it occurred to me that I might avert, or at least delay, the preachment which was intended, by a few interrogatives respecting the family worthies who had been so pompously introduced to us. I therefore hastily put the following question, which I did not intend to be quite so extraordinary a one as it proved to be.

"And pray, Madam, I said, was the founder of your family a married man?"

"A married man?" exclaimed the elder lady.

"A married man?" cried the second.

"A married man?" ejaculated the third.

"That is," I said, "was he twice married, ladies?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Mrs. Winifred. "His first wife was a daughter of Sir Thomas Craddock, of Essex; and by her he had no children, that is, none to live. And his second was a Miss Pendergrass, of the Pendergrasses of Cornwall; and by her he had twelve daughters and one son, namely, Sir Craddock, my grandfather. The daughters all married well: Mary married Sir Charles Fisher, knight; Kitty married Judge Fuller; Betsy married General Bloomfield." And we went through the whole twelve with great exactness, and were, as I thought, about to hear the names of all the descendants of these twelve ladies, when Mrs. Winifred recollected herself, stopped short, and returning to the subject of the conference, required Eugenius to explain his plans respecting Sophia Beauchamp.

Eugenius then spoke, and spoke with much propriety. He said that he should always consider it as his duty to consult the ladies then present on any important

step, as they were his nearest relations and the representatives of the family; and he informed them that it was his wish to enter the church, as he did not love an idle life.

The ladies made no objection to this suggestion. But Mrs. Winifred returned to the charge respecting Sophia, adding, that she did not approve of the connexion. And forthwith appealing to me, as a man of sense and judgment, she asked me, if I did not think that Mr. Lovel, with his superior prospects, might marry a lady of rank and fortune far surpassing those of Miss Beauchamp; hinting that she had actually such a lady in view for him.

In reply to this enquiry, I pleaded the great merits of Miss Beauchamp, the long intimacy which had subsisted between the parties, the excellent education of the young lady, the respectability of her family, and so on; and I even went so far as to hint that whatever Mr. Lovel's prospects might eventually be, at present he had only a moderate competence, and we all trusted that many years would pass before he

might have reason to expect any addition.

Mrs. Winifred received this home thrust without change of countenance, and made the following answer. "It is the present mediocrity of Eugenius's fortune which makes it necessary for him to marry advantageously. And on this very account, and out of regard to my nephew, I must decidedly protest against the connexion with Sophia Beauchamp. And I trust that Eugenius, now knowing my mind, will conduct himself accordingly."

This was coming to the point in good earnest; and Eugenius, in consequence, looked like one struck with death. He first grew pale, then of a deep crimson, and then pale again; but he spoke not a single word: yet he looked so imploringly on me, that I felt myself called upon to speak, and was just on the point of trying my powers of persuasion, when the door was slowly opened, and Mrs. Nuttall swam into the room, bringing in a dish of meat, which she set on the rug for the lap-dogs.

The duenna was dressed in a silk of her

lady's, the fashion of which had not been altered: and hence, as she had adopted her lady's gown, it had seemed necessary also that she should adopt a hoop of the same dimensions.

She came in with her tall bony figure erected to its utmost altitude, and adorned with all the lappets, pinners, flounces, flies, and furbellows, of which the present fashion admits. She came forward, too, not with the alertness of a domestic, but with the easy unceremonious air of an equal; and, calling the pugs by their names, she reproved them for the petted snarls with which they expressed their anxiety to appropriate the whole of the regale each to himself.

Mrs. Nuttall, having stooped to set down the dish, again raised herself to her usual exalted posture, and stood looking round upon the company, while the greedy quadrupeds were riotously regaling themselves to the infinite annoyance of every one present.

This state of things having continued for a few seconds, Mrs. Grizzy, with a short cough and hem, and a raised colour, ven-

tured to say, "Nuttall, we are on business."

"On business," repeated Mrs. Judy.

"On private affairs," proceeded Mrs. Grizzy.

"Affairs," reiterated Mrs. Judy.

"We will ring when the dogs have done," rejoined Mrs. Grizzy.

"Have done," said Mrs. Judy.

"Nuttall," then remarked Mrs. Winifred, "we are engaged at present."

"Engaged at present," repeated Mrs. Grizzy.

"At present," said Mrs. Judy.

"I have a message for my lady," replied the duenna, with a look of suppressed malice.

"A message!" exclaimed Mrs. Winifred, "then why was it not delivered immediately?"

"Because I understood that you were on business," retorted the housekeeper, without vouchsafing to honour her lady with any title of respect, "and I did not choose to disturb you."

Fire flashed from the eye of the angry

female as she pronounced the last pronoun; and her mistress evidently trembled beneath the glance.

"And so," said Mrs. Winifred, "and so, you would not disturb us? Right, very right, Nuttall—considerate—right. But what is your errand to me?"

"What have you done with the bottle of the Balsam of Life?" asked the duenna, with the same insolence as before.

"Wherefore?—What for?—Why is it wanted?" enquired Mrs. Winifred. "Who is hurt? The bottle is in my closet."

Mrs. Nuttall turned to the door, as if she had not heard the question.

"Who is hurt?" repeated Mrs. Winifred, seeming to gather courage from the continued impertinence of the servant.

"Only my nephew," was the answer, as the housekeeper banged out of the door.

Mrs. Grizzy's and Mrs. Judy's short coughs returned; and they both fidgetted in their seats, smoothed their aprons, and looked at each other.

"Who is hurt, does she say?" asked Mrs. Winifred.

"Her nephew, Madam," I answered.

"Her nevy, sister," said Mrs. Grizzy.

"Nevy," said Mrs. Judy.

"*Her* nephew? *Nuttall's* nephew?" exclaimed Mrs. Winifred. And she arose, and rang the bell with violence.

Several servants immediately obeyed the summons.

"Who is hurt?" asked Mrs. Winifred.

"Only Mr. Nuttall," was the answer.

"Only Mr. Nuttall!" cried Mrs. Winifred. "How? In what way?"

"He has cut his thumb," replied Mr. Porter; "and the wound is not of the least consequence."

"Tell Nuttall she is not to come here and frighten us in this way, and all for nothing," said Mrs. Grizzy.

"All for nothing," repeated Mrs. Judy.

"No, don't say any thing, Porter," rejoined Mrs. Winifred. "I will speak to her myself. But, Mr. Airley and Eugenius, we must now, I believe, say good night. This woman has frightened me so, that I am unfit for further conversation." She then returned our bows, and we withdrew.

When arrived at my apartment, Eugenius and I sat till nearly eleven o'clock, talking about what had passed. The young man seemed excessively uneasy. "I cannot, no, I cannot give up my sweet Sophia, my own Sophia," he said, emphatically. "I never can."

"And why should you?" I asked.

"Did you not hear what Mrs. Winifred said, Mr. Airley?" enquired Eugenius.

"I did: but what then?" I rejoined.

"Must I then renounce all prospects of inheriting these noble lands?"

"Do your duty, and leave the lands to Providence," I replied.

"I wish I could," said Eugenius.

"Once again," I answered, "put the lands out of the question, and act as you would act, if you really had no expectation of them. Suppose that these Mrs. Helmsleys were three needy persons, living on small annuities; that you were connected with them in the same degree as you now are; and that they had never done more for you than they actually have done. In such circumstances would you think it necessary

to give up the lady of your heart to please them? You perhaps might think it right to delay your marriage for a time, hoping by patience to obtain their suffrages and their blessings; and you might think it prudent, during that delay, to see your beloved only occasionally, and to devote your time and your attention principally to your profession. But I am certain, that you would never entertain the intention of giving up the desire of your eyes, and the choice of your heart, for the sake of three irrational old women, from whom you expected nothing?"

"Then, Sir," said Eugenius, "you do not think that the present struggle in my mind, is between duty and inclination, but between interest and inclination?"

"The struggle to which you allude arises from your not being able to leave the future in the hands of Providence," I answered. "I have told you before, and I repeat it again, that no dependence is to be placed on the favour of your aunts. Mrs. Winifred, if not overruled by family pride, is as likely to leave her fortune to the Nuttalls as to you;

and Mr. Barnaby Semple has quite as good a chance with Mrs. Judy as you have. Well then, so be it: leave all to Providence. The ladies have no objection to your following a profession: make up your mind to be the successor of Dr. Beauchamp. Experience might have taught you, that a person may be as happy at the parsonage as at the Hall, and as elegant and as refined too. And to encourage you, I am ready to bestow on your lovely bride a fortune equal to your own; and, indeed, I will bestow it on her from this day forward, whether you take her or not; and will go to-morrow to Beckington for that purpose: for this is what I have long determined."

Eugenius seemed overcome by this declaration on my part, and for some minutes seemed to have yielded to those simple views which might have secured his peace; but he again became irresolute, and I was deeply grieved at the state of mind in which he took his leave of me.

CHAPTER XI.

VARIOUS PERPLEXITIES.

I DID as I had resolved: the next morning after my conversation with Theodore, I rode over to Mr. Watson, an eminent lawyer at Beckington, to whom I gave directions for making over the amount of four thousand pounds to Miss Sophia Beauchamp, under trustees; for which office I selected her father and Mr. Lovel. I had long intended this; for I have been living at Roxobel so much below my income, that I am become quite a rich man. And let it here be observed, that the art of becoming rich consists in living under one's income.

I returned to Roxobel about four in the afternoon; and, feeling fatigued, did not go out that evening. In the morning, I

walked over to the parsonage, and found the doctor in his study, in low spirits. "Dear Mr. Airley," he said, "why have you been so long absent? We have had a distressed family; we wanted you."

I then told him what I had been about.

The good father melted into tears. "I cannot thank you," he said; "I cannot thank you. I never till yesterday felt it to be an evil not to have a fortune for my child. But tell me, thou best and most upright of human beings," (I repeat his own kind and partial words,) "ought I to allow my child to avail herself of your kindness?"

"In the first place," I answered, "you cannot hinder it; and, in the second place, I will let you into a secret: I am a rich man. Indeed, I once was what the world would have called a great man; and perhaps I might add noble. My retired and humble mode of life, too, has made money accumulate. What I have done for your daughter therefore is no inconvenience to me; and I beg that you will make yourself quite easy respecting it, and allow

us to proceed to matters of more moment. What has happened during my absence?"

"Many things," replied the doctor; "but, upon my word, I do not know that I can tell you. Lucy, however, is in the next room: and if you will go to her, Mr. Airley, she will explain all."

I immediately arose, and walking into the common sitting-room of the family, I found Miss Lovel writing a letter.

She expressed great pleasure on seeing me; and asked me why I had not called the day before.

"Tell me first," I said, "what has happened since we parted."

She immediately obeyed; and I shall give the substance of her information.

It seems that Eugenius, on the morrow of his visit at the Hall, appeared very much dejected at breakfast; and that Sophia, upon questioning him in private, obtained a full avowal from him of all that had passed on the previous evening. She also inferred from his manner, that his mind still dwelt upon the Roxobel estates. And on thus discovering that he was not likely

to act for himself, she had resolved, with a degree of energy unexpected in her character, to act for him.

"'Eugenius,' she said, 'I will not pretend to conceal my regard for you, though I cannot say when that regard commenced; but I am resolved that I will be no impediment in the way of your prosperity. Farewell, dear Eugenius; I will meet you no more as I have done. I liberate you from all engagements, and it shall soon be known at the Hall that you are free.'

"So saying, she left him," continued Lucy, "though he would willingly have detained her, and, shutting herself up in her own room, I there found her, when I arrived about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, weeping in the most affecting manner. When I heard the cause of her distress, I hastened to look for Eugenius, and I found him in the woods, in a state of mind still more unhappy than that of Sophia; though not more unhappy than he really deserves to be.

"I scolded him," proceeded Lucy; "I could not help it; and I told him, that So-

phia was worth a thousand Halls, and a million of dirty acres; and assured him, that he was not worthy of her, if he would not readily relinquish the whole world for her sake. And upon this, he confessed that he could not be happy without her; that she was dearer to him than life; and that he never intended to give her up.

"'Then go immediately and say as much to our aunts,' I said. 'Give your future prospects to the winds, and your castles to the air, in which they are built; and make yourself happy in your own innocent way: and I only wish that it were in my power to be equally happy.'"

"And what did he say to this, my Lucy?" I asked.

"Why, he was for trimming and acting by halves," she replied; "and he said, 'I might perhaps be enabled to preserve Mrs. Winifred's good will, without quite giving up Sophia; we are young; might we not wait?'

"'Wait! to be sure you may,' I answered: 'but don't use any deceit. What does Mr. Airley advise?'

"He then related the substance of your conversation with him: and I said, 'Cannot you resolve to adopt Mr. Airley's counsel?' And I reasoned with him a long time on the subject; but, as he still continued irresolute, I at length returned to the house, and went to comfort Sophia.

"'You have not brought Eugenius with you,' she remarked; 'so I will do what I intended.'

"'What is that, Sophia?' I asked.

"'I will tell you, when you come up from dinner: but you must now go down, and comfort my parents,' she replied.

"I did as she desired; and went down into the dining-room. We had a very sad meal: and, after it was ended, I returned to Sophia. She was still crying, and she put the copy of a letter into my hand, and said, 'Read that, Lucy: I have sent the letter, and therefore it will be too late to blame me.'

"'I hope that you have done nothing hastily?' I observed.

"'No, not hastily,' she replied; 'but I think I have done right. I have written to

Mrs. Winifred, and have begged her not to be offended with her nephew on my account, as I certainly would never stand in his way, but should consider him as being at liberty to marry whomsoever he pleased.'

"'You have done wrong, dear Sophia,' I cried.

"'No', she answered, sorrowfully: 'if Eugenius could hesitate between me and an estate, I would rather die than refrain from setting him at liberty. *Die!*' she repeated, 'I shall not be urged to that extremity, my dear Lucy; for you will love me still, and God will help me. But Oh, Eugenius!' she exclaimed; and she sank upon my bosom, in an agony which I shall never forget.

"When Sophia was a little composed," continued Miss Lovel, "I returned to Eugenius, whom I found still ruminating in the wood. 'Brother,' I said, 'the work is done, the blow is struck; you have lost Sophia:' and, so saying, I shewed him the copy of her letter to Mrs. Winifred.

"I was sorry, however, that I had been so hasty; for he appeared to be quite over-

come: he turned as pale as death, struck his hand upon his forehead, and called himself a miserable wretch, and I know not what; and then growing instantly calmer, he begged that I would call Sophia to him.

"'What for?' I enquired. 'Are you resolved to take her, and reject the estates?' And then I abused the estates, and called them 'vile, dirty, and worthless.' And yet the woods and valleys of Roxobel are lovely far beyond all the woods and valleys in the world. But, Mr. Airley, why are they so? Only because we spent our happy early days in them, we who are now separated to meet no more? I was, indeed, very angry with Eugenius, though I could not help pitying him; and yet, on the other hand, I could not blame Sophia."

"You will allow, dear Lucy," I remarked, that the situation of Eugenius is a trying one?"

"I do not see any great difficulty in it," she replied. "Only let him act towards our aunts, as I have acted towards aunt Judy, telling them at once that he wants

nothing from them but their good will and their blessing; and he will then be at liberty to be happy."

"What!" I said, "do you suppose that this would be the most probable means of success?"

"Certainly I do," she answered.

"And was it with such a view," I asked, "that you adopted the line of conduct which you have pursued towards your aunt Judy?" And the thought glanced across my mind, "Surely this sweet creature cannot have had such artful intentions as these?"

Lucy looked hard at me, and asked me to repeat the question, as if she did not understand it: and although I was really ashamed of entertaining a suspicion so derogatory to the young lady's honourable feelings, I nevertheless repeated the query.

Upon this second proposal of the question she smiled, and replied, "Ah, Mr. Airley, you cannot make me believe that you suspect me of such low cunning. And of what use would it be to me, if my aunts were to give me all their lands?"

"Why, you would be a great lady," I answered.

"But I could not keep them," she replied.

"Wherefore?" I enquired.

"Because I hope I am not unjust," was her answer. "If my aunts were to leave me all their lands, I would receive them with one hand, and give them to Eugenius with the other."

"And what would Theodore say?" I enquired.

"What would he say, if I were to act otherwise?" she asked. "He would not own me."

"Are you quite sure that such is his way of thinking?" was my rejoinder.

"O, Mr. Airley!" she answered, "you are playing with me now: you cannot suspect your own Lucy and your Theodore of being mean!"

"No, my child, my beloved," I answered. "O Lucy dear! retain that sweet simplicity, that upright way of thinking, and you will make your poor tutor the happiest man on earth!"

She looked at me with such an expression of innocent affection as was surely never before exhibited but in the features of dimpled infancy. And then, returning to our former subject, she thus proceeded.—"Poor Eugenius seemed so deeply affected by the letter and its contents, that I consented to return to Sophia; and when I reached her room, I found her reading the answer which she had just received from Mrs. Winifred.

"'There, Lucy dear,' she exclaimed, offering the letter for my perusal, 'all is finished. Mrs. Winifred thanks and praises me for my upright conduct. She says that I have redeemed her good will, and have done honour to my parents. Farewell then, dear Eugenius, farewell for ever. May you be happy! happier than your poor Sophia can expect to be! Go to him, Lucy; go, my sweet sister; and tell him that the sacrifice is made. But I cannot see him. All must depend on my not seeing him.'

"I then went again to my poor brother," continued Lucy, "and delivered Sophia's message; on which he seemed to become

quite sullen, and immediately hastened to shut himself up in his room: and when I requested to speak to him there, he would not see me.

"I spent the night with my beloved Sophia," continued Miss Lovel, "but no sleep could either of us obtain; for my poor bedfellow wept and sobbed incessantly, and I could not refrain from weeping with her.

"This morning, Eugenius sent me word that he had resolved to set off on his return to Oxford to-morrow; and that he had business at Beckington which would fully occupy him to-day. He accordingly departed for this latter place as early as seven o'clock, and has not yet returned."

"And Sophia!" I asked; "how is she this morning?"

"She is composed," replied Lucy, "but she is very sad. I will fetch her down to see you. It is a lovely morning, and we will take her out to walk. But, perhaps, you had better not mention Eugenius to her, unless she introduces the subject."

Lucy did as she had proposed, and soon came back, accompanied by her gentle friend. I thought I never saw my Sophia look more lovely than when Lucy led her into the room; the tenderest concern and the deepest sadness being depictured on her countenance. Sophia seemed predetermined to be composed; but at the sight of me, she burst into tears, and, advancing, seized my hand, and would probably have sunk upon my bosom, had she not been restrained by that lively sense of female delicacy, which never for a moment appears to forsake her. It seemed, that she had already been informed of the settlement I had made in her favour, and she said in reference to it, "Ah, good, kind Mr. Airley, it is not your fault if I am not happy. But take back your present, dear and honoured friend. I cannot, I must not, receive it."

"We will talk of that another time," I rejoined; "we shall have brighter days than this, my dear Sophia. It is our duty now to bend beneath the storm, my daughter," I added.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face."

Then, still holding that fair hand which was now no longer to be bestowed on Eugenius, I led the young ladies into the shrubbery, and we entered the woods. We there sat down; and Lucy and I endeavoured to discourse upon topics which were altogether foreign to those which occupied and agitated our feelings, but we found our plan utterly ineffectual to the purpose of communicating ease to our minds, and were about to confess that our efforts were vain, when an approaching quick step met our ears, and Eugenius came forward with a hurried air, a flushed countenance, and a disordered dress. When within view of us, he started; and Sophia arose, and walked a few steps, as if desirous of avoiding an interview: and then stopping, and leaning against a tree which overhung the path, she again turned her eyes towards us, and her hat at the same instant falling off, revealed her lovely

face and her soft blue eyes bathed in tears.

"O, Sophia! my sweet Sophia!" exclaimed the unhappy young man, advancing towards her, "am I permitted to see you again?" And as he approached, she clung more closely to the tree, as if fear had mingled with her other feelings.

"O, my Sophia! my own Sophia!" cried Eugenius, falling on his knees before her, "forgive your Eugenius. Was it possible that I could have *balanced* for an instant, hesitated for a moment, between the enjoyment of your society, and all that the world besides could give? Take back your Eugenius; take back your miserable Eugenius; and blot the last few hours from your recollection: blot them out here, in this very place, under this very tree, where once I left you bound, in our early and our happy days. Take me, my Sophia, to your heart; pardon and receive me, and restore me to that happiness from which I have fallen through my own disgraceful hesitation."

Sophia had relaxed her grasp of the tree,

and had turned towards Eugenius; and now her fair face fell upon his shoulder, while her sobs were audible to us, even at the distance at which we stood.

"And will you pardon, will you receive me again, my sweet one?" exclaimed Eugenius, rising from his knees. "Will you forgive your unworthy Eugenius?"

"Forgive you, my Eugenius!" she repeated; "I have nothing to forgive. But I have given my promise to Mrs. Helmsley, and I *will* keep it. Free you are, and free you shall be."

"No," said Eugenius, "I am not *free*. I will not be *free;* and here I make a solemn vow——"

"I will not accept your vows," interrupted Sophia, with spirit and decision. "You are free, and shall remain so. Never will I depart from my promise."

"What have you promised?" asked Eugenius, hastily.

"Only," answered Sophia, "that till I am of age——"

"Till you are of age!" repeated Eugenius; "and in the mean time?"

"And in the mean time, we are to be as strangers," observed Sophia. "And when that period shall have arrived, you are still to consider yourself as *free*, and as being perfectly at liberty to decide for yourself, without reference to any transaction of our younger days. This is the sum of my promise, and I will not depart from it."

"And could you have the cruelty to make such a promise, Sophia?" asked Eugenius.

"I am not cruel," replied Sophia. "O that I had a heart of steel! that I were capable of being unfeeling!"—and fresh tears flowed from her eyes.

"I will not submit to what you have chosen to promise, Sophia," exclaimed Eugenius. "What business have those old women to dictate to me?"

"None in the world," rejoined Miss Lucy, coming forward; "and this is what I have said before."

"Then will I go *this moment*," said Eugenius, "yes, *this moment*, to the Hall, and tell Mrs. Winifred that I have made up my

mind, and that I shall not consider myself required to obtain her permission in order to make myself happy."

"You may do as you please, Eugenius," added Sophia; "but my word is passed, and it shall stand fixed. The Almighty helping me, I will adhere to my promise: it shall never be said of me, that I have injured your prospects, Eugenius."

"You do not love me, Sophia," retorted Mr. Lovel, "or you could not act towards me as you do."

Sophia looked down, but did not speak.

"You do not love me," repeated Eugenius; "you never have loved me."

The tears fell in large drops from Sophia's eyes, but still she was silent.

"Well then," proceeded Eugenius, "if you desire freedom, Miss Beauchamp, you shall have it; here I render it to you:" and so saying, he threw her hand from him with an air of scorn, and was turning away, when Lucy reproved him sharply.

"What would you have me do?" was his answer. "If Sophia loved me, she could not treat me thus:—I have been mistaken

in her. It is not the poor Eugenius, but the heir of Roxobel, whom she has desired." And he made some unhandsome observations respecting the mercenary disposition of women in general. Indeed, the young man seemed to be completely beside himself; or, perhaps, he expected that Sophia would be induced, by this passionate behaviour, to depart from her promise made to Mrs. Winifred. Such, however, was his irritation, that he walked away, leaving us to lead our weeping but nobly-minded Sophia back to the parsonage. When this business was effected, I hastened in search of the young man, with the hope of bringing him to reason.

He was not to be found in the neighbourhood of the parsonage: but I at length traced him to the Hall, and found him in the library. He was sitting in the window, resting his head upon his hand; and the hectic flush upon his countenance had now changed to a deadly paleness.

"My dear Eugenius," I said, as I approached the window, "I am come, if possible, to set things right: you have spoken

unkindly to Sophia; but I am willing to endeavour to make your peace."

"My peace!" reiterated Eugenius. "Ah, there is my wickedness: it is in consulting my own peace, that I have grieved the sweetest and most gentle creature upon earth, one who is so wholly devoted to my interest, that she is ready to sacrifice all her feelings that I may be happy; nay, she has done so: and instead of thanking her, I have upbraided and reproached her. Oh, Mr. Airley, were it but now possible to make her believe that I love her more than the whole earth besides;—could I but persuade her, that I attach as little value as herself to all earthly possessions, only desiring that I may be enabled to marry her, and to live in humble contentment;—I should be happy. But I have wounded her gentle heart; I feel that I have: and I am miserable." Then rising up, he walked about the room in great agony.

I endeavoured to soothe him, intimating that the evil he had done might yet be remedied. "Sit down, my friend, write to Sophia, and tell her that you are really

grieved at what you have done. Tell her, also, that you will return to Oxford, and to your studies; and that you will make haste and get ordained, in order that you may assist her father; and that you will await her pleasure, before you ever presume again upon her favour. This is the best course you can pursue. Write your letter; and I will be the bearer of it, and bring you the answer."

Eugenius was somewhat comforted by this proposal. He wrote his letter; and had consigned it to my hands at the moment in which Mr. Porter appeared with his ladies' compliments, and an invitation to the young gentleman to dine with them. I advised, nay pressed Eugenius, to accept the invitation, promising to return in the evening with Sophia's answer.

I then proceeded to the parsonage, where I had a long conversation with the young ladies, and pressed Sophia to write a farewell letter to Eugenius. She complied with my wishes, and wrote a lovely letter, entreating him to conduct himself well, and to do honour to the education which her father

had given him. The last sentence of her letter was to this effect: "Farewell, dear Eugenius; you can now only make your poor Sophia happy, by behaving well, and may the Almighty help you so to do!"

I thought that Eugenius would probably derive more encouragement from this short passage than was intended by the writer; and in this supposition I was not mistaken. When I gave the letter to him in the evening, he read it with extreme agitation; but his countenance brightened as he concluded it, and he immediately became more composed.

I stayed with him in the library at the Hall during the rest of the evening. "This house is now to be my home, when I come to Roxobel," he said: "Mrs. Winifred has desired that it may be so: and I am rightly punished; for I have often looked from the parsonage with admiring eyes at this house; and now, Mr. Airley, I would give all I have upon earth to be again an inhabitant of the happy parsonage, the lovely, lovely parsonage."

I was glad to see that the feelings of the poor youth were now become more soft and tender. Lucy came to us about six o'clock, to tell us that Sophia was more easy, and had sent her best wishes to Eugenius. The young lady then made interest for tea in the library, where she performed the honours of the table; and I was never more struck with her sweetly conciliating manners, than upon this occasion.

"Eugenius," she said, in her usual lively manner, "I will be your friend with Sophia, she shall hear enough of you, I promise you. I will praise you to the skies, whenever I possibly can: so do not make me a story-teller. Get your picture drawn, and send it me, and I will hang it on the favourite tree, and Sophia shall find it there. Mind that you look your very best when it is taken. And I will do more for you: I will keep my aunts in good humour with you. I will declare that you are the very picture of Sir Craddock Helmsley, and that you will be still more like him when you have swallowed a few dozen dozens of

Oxford port. I shall do great things for you. And I am sure of this, that I shall see you and Sophia lord and lady of this great house; though I do not think Sophia cares about the great house, except as it stands connected with the great man who is to live in the great house. And when you are lord of all these manors, you shall refit the gamekeeper's house for me, for I have set my heart on living there; and Mr. Airley shall have the wing that looks towards the pool, and there he may converse with the Echo, whenever he is tired of more substantial companions."

It is impossible to be long sad in the society of our Lucy dear, the *sunbeam, the star, the light, the glory,* of Roxobel. There is poetry in the very thought of Lucy. What a mixture of love and tenderness was there in the expression of her brother's eye, as he regarded her! And I could not help acknowledging, as I gazed on these beloved young people, that there is not on earth a more interesting tie than that which connects a brother and a sister.

Our evening passed more calmly than I had expected; and in the dawn of the following day, Lucy and I walked with Eugenius to the coach which was to convey him from the bowers of Roxobel.

Thus concluded our long vacation: yet, alas! alas! not with the smiles with which it commenced. Our summer breezes are become chill, our blossoms have fallen, and our halcyons are fled;—but yet, we will not despair.

CHAPTER XII.

Apparently written at different times, and at considerable intervals.

DR. BEAUCHAMP is very low. I went this morning to the parsonage, and was sorry to find him so dejected. He was sitting in his study: and, though a large folio lay open by his side, it did not appear as if he had been reading. I asked, with some anxiety, if he were not well.

"*My boys!*" was his reply; "my boys and girls! but God's will be done."

I stayed with him during the rest of the day. Mrs. Beauchamp has begged me to give him as much of my company as possible.

We have had another letter from Theodore, written in high spirits. He talks of

promotion. Whence is it to come, but through Mrs. Winifred's interest? I hope I may be pardoned, but I cannot help suspecting the cloven foot under this cloak of kindness.

The public papers still speak of disturbances in Bengal; and reports are prevalent, that we are about to send an armed force to the assistance of our settlement there.

Yesterday morning, my sweet Lucy came to me in the library, with a countenance more beaming than I had seen it for a considerable time. I, however, did not notice this, for fear of reviving painful recollections. Before we parted, she asked me to accompany her, after my early dinner, in a walk towards the cottage in the dingle, which had once belonged to Mary Field; and she informed me that we were to call at the parsonage for Sophia.

How could I employ myself better? and, as Taffy said, on an occasion to which I have already referred, "I felt myself a happy man, in having two such companions." I accordingly concluded my dinner as ex-

peditiously as possible, and was met, in stepping out of my house, by Miss Lucy. We took the usual road to the parsonage, and found our fair Sophia ready to join us. There were several paths which led to the cottage, and one and another were proposed; but Lucy chose the way which lies through the shrubbery and the woods behind the parsonage.

Autumn was far advanced, but the evening was delightful; and we pursued our route without interruption, till we had arrived near the tree so celebrated in our story. Here Miss Lucy contrived to drop her glove, and then to break the string which fastened her shoe, and then to get her cloak entangled on a thorn; and, in short, managed to cause so considerable a delay, that I began to suspect some innocent device, such as ladies love: and upon looking in the direction of the favourite tree, I espied something of a glittering appearance, hanging by a chain from the lowest branch.

Sophia was busily occupied in disengaging her friend's cloak, while Lucy was

equally busy in fastening it again on some other thorny bush. At length, Miss Lovel exclaimed, as if in anger, "What is the matter with this part of the wood? The bushes and trees hereabouts have certainly some peculiar power of attraction."

"Why, my dear Lucy," said Sophia, "what makes you so awkward? You entangle yourself faster than I can disentangle you."

"None are so easily entangled," I remarked, "as those who wish to be so."

Sophia looked at me, as if surprised at the remark; and at the same instant the glittering object, hanging in mid air from the favourite tree, attracted her observation.

She immediately conceived what it was, and darting towards it, she snatched it from the bough, and found it to be a beautiful miniature of her beloved Eugenius, set in gold, and encircled by a deep azure border. At the back of the miniature was the hair of the original elegantly plaited, inclosing his cipher in pearls. The crystal drops suffused her lovely eyes, as she gazed on the beautiful features; and, turning to

Lucy, who was no longer among the thorns, she attempted to speak, but melted into tears.

I immediately pressed forward to see the miniature; and, at the same instant, a burst of merriment from behind the tree, betrayed the pretty Ellen, who had been set, like another Miriam, to watch another Moses.

"Go away, naughty girl," said Miss Lucy. "Who bade you shew your face? Get away with you, and I will see you again on Sunday."

"A plot! a plot!" I exclaimed; "a deep-laid scheme, most wisely invented and executed! Miss Lucy, if you teach Ellen to play such tricks as this, I shall forbid her ever speaking to you again."

"I teach her tricks!" cried Lucy; "pray, what have I done in the business?" And turning to Ellen, she added, "Go away, make haste home; you are a sad mar-plot."

"No, stay, Ellen," I said, "and tell us who is the contriver of this trick."

"What trick, Sir?" asked Ellen, making a low courtesy, but at the same time shewing her white teeth.

"Go away," repeated Lucy, "and answer no questions."

On this, the young girl, courtesying again, ran off in high glee.

In the mean time the gentle Sophia was gazing on the miniature with looks of tender sorrow; and, at length, she raised it to her lips, almost unconsciously, and, approaching the tree, replaced it on the bough.

"Come, Mr. Airley," said Lucy, "let us go on:" and we proceeded a few steps, leaving the mournful Sophia still lingering under the tree.

At length, Miss Beauchamp called to her friend, saying, "Lucy, come and take your miniature."

"I have no miniature here," replied the other, still receding from the tree.

"Don't go, Lucy," exclaimed Sophia; "don't leave the picture here; it may be stolen."

"Perchance it may," replied Lucy; "but it is not mine, and I will not take it from where it hangs."

Sophia then called to me; but I bowed, and was silent.

Sophia seemed much distressed. She burst afresh into tears, and said, "Don't make me take it, Lucy: if I look upon it, it will break my heart. It was not meant for me."

"But indeed it was," exclaimed Lucy, returning; "it was sent for that same sweet Sophia, who was once left bound in a wood. And the only favour that the unhappy person who sent it implores, is, that his dear Sophia will take it, and keep it for his sake." As she spoke these words, Lucy approached her friend, and throwing her arms around her neck, called her her gentle and her lovely sister. After this, she took the miniature from the bough, and dexterously threw the chain to which it was attached around the neck of Sophia. Not another word was afterwards spoken on the subject. Sophia resisted no longer; and I observed, after a few minutes, that she had somehow concealed the treasure among the folds of her dress.

The remainder of our walk was sweetly placid: though, in returning through the park, under the woods of Torville, we met

with a little adventure, which interested the young ladies.

Close by one of the entrances into that dark domain, we heard a plaintive cry, and, on examining among the bushes, we found a little white dog, with one leg broken. Sophia was the first who saw the poor creature, and she was so much affected by its condition, that she resolved to carry it home. The poor little animal, however, was covered with blood and mire, which caused some deliberation; and I offered my services to carry the creature, its imploring looks having won our compassion. But before I could take it up, we espied a labourer passing through the park, at no great distance; and calling to him, he gladly undertook the service, for the reward of a shilling. "Indeed," he said, "I would have done the job for nothing, to oblige the young ladies."

Altogether, there was something affecting in the events of this afternoon, which I shall not easily forget; and yet I cannot precisely account for my sensations. But Lucy and Sophia, my two lovely compa-

nions, were so mild, so sweet, so gentle, so truly affectionate and respectful to their old tutor, and at the same time so anxious to make each other happy, that a peculiar charm seemed to attend their intercourse. Lucy, too, exerted herself so much to be cheerful, that both Sophia and I felt it would be actually ungrateful not to render a suitable return to her efforts, and to endeavour to make ourselves as happy as we could. And, indeed, it was apparent that Sophia had not been at all displeased by the remembrance which she had that day received of the unaltered affection of her Eugenius.

Three days are past since the pleasant walk which I have described. During the succeeding afternoon I went towards the Warrener's Tower; but finding that Black Tom was from home, I returned towards the park, and coming to a gate which opens into the road to which the proprietor of Torville has a right, I found Mr. Jeffry Griffith there on horseback, speaking to a man in a waggoner's frock.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Airley," said Mr.

Griffith. "Look at the condition of this gate; it has been completely torn off the hinges, and the post broken: and they tell me it was done for the purpose by Rawson, as he was hauling coals in a cart. However," continued the steward, "whether the mischief was done for the purpose, or not for the purpose, I shall make it an excuse for a visit to Torville; for young Taylor has been wishing me to see the widow myself; and I am resolved to effect this in some way or other. What say you, Mr. Airley?—will you come with me to-morrow? We will go on horseback, if you please; and I will take Richard with us, that we may have a strong party."

It will not be questioned but that the curiosity of the little man prompted him to close with this proposal. And, accordingly, the next day, at the appointed hour, Mr. Griffith appeared at my door, duly mounted, and accompanied by Richard, leading a quiet pony from the Hall stables, on which I had mounted once or twice before.

We were obliged to make a considerable circuit in order to get near Torville, for

it cannot be approached in a straight line on horseback in any direction: and, at length, with some difficulty, we arrived at the door of the yard directly opposite to that which I have mentioned before as being choked up with weeds and rubbish. This door was a double one, and looked as if it had seldom been opened during the last forty years. Here the steward directed Richard to knock, which the young man did with a hearty good will, shaking the old door-posts to their very foundations, and at the same time awakening every dog, goose, and turkey, within the yard, with the noise of his assault; yet, amid all this uproar, no human voice was distinguishable. Again Richard knocked, and again the uproar was renewed. At length, the gates flew open, and we entered the ruinous court, and rode up to the first door we saw, which was the same from which the virago had issued on my second visit to this desolate place.

The noise and commotion, as we entered the court, were so disagreeable, that Richard dismounted in a passion, and laid

his whip about him with such effect, that the hens, turkeys, geese, and guinea-fowls, all retreated into the back-ground; while the dogs, two of which were chained to their kennels, withdrew into their holes, and contented themselves with low growlings and angry looks, such as dogs and dog-like men are liberal in bestowing on those whom they do not like.

Having performed this mighty exploit, Richard, being encouraged by his master, mounted the steps, and thundered at the door. The sound was returned from within, in deep and hollow murmurs, but still no person appeared.

"Mount the horse again, Richard," said the steward, "and ride up to the kitchen-window, and there rattle well, even if it be at the hazard of cracking a few panes of the old green glass."

Richard did not wait to be told twice what to do. Had he done so, it would have been a grievous departure from the accustomed habits of the knights of the order of the shoulderknot, to whom mischief is more congenial than whiskey to an Irishman.

He rode up to the window without delay; and being just sufficiently elevated to reach it, he made such a clatter against the casement, that the steward cried, "Mercy!" beginning to tremble, lest he should have to pay smart-money for the liberty which he had given to the servant. At length, one pane gave way, and went smash into the inner room, which proved, as seen through the opening thus effected, to be a large and lofty kitchen, blackened with smoke, and well lined with flitches of bacon and dusty bags formed of brown paper, which seemed to be almost coeval with the rafters from which they were suspended.

The clatter caused by the broken glass as it fell on the floor, had the desired effect; for, an instant afterwards, the furious genius of the place, namely, Jenny Rawson, appeared at the opening, emitting toads and vipers from her lips, like the naughty girl in the fairy tale; by which expressions, I would, with the writer of the said renowned tale, be understood to mean every species of vile and opprobrious abuse.

As the vixen opened a small casement, and put forth her angry visage, the knight of the shoulderknot drew back his horse, effecting the manœuvre with such activity, that the steward could not refrain from merriment, and laughed till his sides shook again.

There was a mixture of fear in the rage of Mrs. Rawson, when she discovered the force of the enemy; and, stopping short in the middle of certain violent invectives, which she was in the act of pouring out upon the footman, she said, "Mr. Griffith, was it by your orders that this assault was made upon the house?"

"No harm was intended, Mrs. Rawson," replied the steward; "if the young man has been so unfortunate as to break a pane of your window, I am most willing to pay the damage. What may be the value of the broken glass?"

"Mr. Griffith," said the vixen, "it is not a shilling or two that shall pay for a wilful assault on the property of Mrs. Torville: the young man shall be made to give an account of this misdemeanour before the

justices; so keep your dirty silver to yourself."

"With all my heart," replied the steward, "we will, if you please, carry this matter before the magistrates; and then two or three birds may be killed with one stone: we can then settle the affair of the gate-post, and some other little matters which have lain by somewhat too long. And your mistress will, I trust, have no objection to make her appearance in court upon the occasion. And, by the by," added the steward, "I must see her now, on very particular business. Come round, good woman, and open the door; I am come on purpose."

"What do you want with her?" asked Mrs. Rawson; "can't I tell her your message?"

"No," answered the steward, "I must see her myself. Is she at home?"

"She is not to be spoken with," replied Mrs. Rawson, drily.

"Is not she?" said the steward; "well, we will see that presently. Your husband, Mrs. Rawson, has wilfully broken the gate-

post of the east road to Torville: and unless your mistress gives me satisfaction, I will have her up before the court."

"Well," replied the dame, "and then we will have you there too, for the broken window which that fellow there has just smashed."

"I have not the least objection to face the magistrates," rejoined the steward. "Mr. Airley is witness that I offered to pay the damage."

"Well, Sir," replied Mrs. Rawson, "then, as we are neighbours, I am willing to take the money for the broken glass."

"No, no," returned the steward, "let that stand in part against the gate."

Mr. Griffith then produced a note. "Take that to your mistress, and tell her to read it; and say I must see her immediately." So saying, he handed the note through the broken pane, and Mrs. Rawson disappeared with it through some interior door.

The messenger was absent more than a quarter of an hour, during which time we were busied in reconnoitering the place.

The old house, with its unpainted shut-

ters, and its high roof displaying three tiers of windows, reminded me of that style of building which prevailed in the French palaces and châteaux in the time of Catharine de Medicis. Gloomy, ponderous, inconvenient, and inelegant, they neither possessed a single ornament of architecture, nor exhibited the appearance of neatness or convenience; though their rude and inhospitable aspect well agreed with the spirit of the age in which they were constructed, a period in which the European nations seemed to unite all the ferocity of the darker ages which had immediately preceded them, with many of the vices of more polished times.

As I sat on my quiet pony, looking up at this gloomy mansion, in the higher stories of which the daws and bats had for many years retained an undisturbed dominion, I amused myself with a long train of fancies, conjuring up to my imagination the knights and dames who had formerly shone in lace and velvet in the wide halls and galleries, and picturing to my mind the various scenes of revelry which had probably taken place within these time-worn walls. I was, how-

ever, awakened from my reveries by the re-appearance of Mrs. Rawson's head at the broken pane. "Here, Sir," said the woman, "here is my mistress's answer;" and so saying, she protruded her hand through the aperture, and presented a strange kind of letter, written on greasy paper, and folded so as to form a square; the direction being superscribed on the very top of the folded paper. Mr. Griffith took the letter from the hand of the virago, and opening and reading it, handed it to me. It was as follows.

"Mr. Griffith,

"i don't know what bussness you has here. if my man as done your gate any harm, i am willin to have it put rit. bein a lone woman i chose to live retired and see no company—but that is no ones bussness but mine.

"So no more———Fanny Torville."

This curious epistle was indited in a cramped old-fashioned Italian hand; and some of the words could only be inferred from the context. Mr. Griffith, however, knew the writing to be that of the widow, and so far it was satisfactory. "Well,"

he remarked, turning to me, "I know not what is to be done next. I believe they are all of one sort in this house, and, therefore, perhaps they are best left alone."

With this observation, we turned our horses out of the court, and returned as wise as we went, though, to be sure, somewhat crest-fallen at our defeat.

CHAPTER XIII.

Written after a considerable interval.

A LETTER from Theodore has thrown us all into confusion; it has, I fear, proved too much for his poor father. The young man has obtained his promotion, and is now a lieutenant. This second step has also been procured for him by Mrs. Winifred; and now, to me at least, the cloven foot is developed.

I cannot say that I see the whole of the scheme, nor how she means to bring it to bear; but, if it is as I suspect, she is *deep, deep* as the grave. Yet not more deep than absurd. Can it be possible, that that old woman Nuttall has gained so entire an ascendancy over such a mind as Mrs. Winifred's, as to be able to induce her to

be guilty of the most base conduct, in order to promote the vile purposes of her servant? By what awful influence, what secret tie, does this low and miserable woman contrive to retain a person of Mrs. Helmsley's consequence and strong sense under her dreadful thraldom? And yet, strange as it appears, it is evident to every observer, that Mrs. Winifred trembles beneath the eye of her waiting-maid. And what is the object at which Mrs. Nuttall is aiming, and to which she is bending the will of her haughty mistress?—what, but the union of her nephew with Miss Lovel?

I am more and more convinced that this is the aim of the housekeeper. But, as I before asked, how has she been able to bend the will of her mistress to this object? How has she contrived to make her lady thus act in concert with her in the promotion of her insolent design? Here is a mystery which I cannot solve; and yet I am more and more convinced of the correctness of my surmises with respect to the intentions of the parties. Neither is the project a new one: it is cer-

tainly older than the ball which took place just after my arrival at Roxobel. The existence of this absurd scheme, I confess, has occurred to my mind more than once before; but I have always rejected the thought of it, as being so completely ridiculous, as not to be deserving of serious consideration. However, it will force itself into notice, notwithstanding my settled opinion of it.

Wherefore has Mrs. Winifred been so anxious to procure promotion for young Beauchamp? Why has she contrived to send him on so dangerous a service? Is murder in her heart? And is it to please Mrs. Nuttall that she has projected and executed her black design? But, be this as it may, our Theodore is gone; our beloved is lost to us. A letter received from him this morning announces his promotion to a lieutenancy in a regiment which is already stationed in theEast Indies. He is under immediate orders to join it, and has only time to procure his outfit, and proceed to his ship. We cannot see him, even for a moment. Well, perhaps, this is for the

best. Yet one moment! what would we give for one moment of our beloved one's society? Yet all is right, no doubt. It would only renew our affliction, to behold our Theodore for a few hours, and then to be forced to part from him for many years, if not for ever.

I cannot describe the scene which I witnessed at the parsonage, when I was sent for in haste to read the letter. I found all the dear family assembled, and in tears. Miss Lovel was present; and some expressions, which she used on this occasion, still ring as it were in my ears. "And must he go? must he go?" she exclaimed; "is there no retreating with honour? Oh, cruel, cruel Mrs. Winifred! I now see it all; I understand it all. But it shall not be: I never, never will think of any one except my Theodore. My resolution is taken; and it shall not be long before she shall know it in its full extent."

From time to time this lively and warm-hearted girl broke out into such exclamations as these, accompanied with audible bursts of grief; while her gentler compa-

nion was weeping in silence; and, near to them, sat the kind stepmother, dumb with sorrow.

If Mrs. Beauchamp has a favourite among the young people, it is Theodore; and it is, perhaps, not improbable, that the present grief of the family is in some respects to be attributed to that excess of fondness which prevented her from curbing that natural impetuosity of temper to which her son is subject—an impetuosity which led him, so suddenly and without reflection, to throw himself into the net prepared for him by designing persons. The more I reflect, the more I am convinced, that all Mrs. Winifred has done in this business has been with the view of getting rid of this fine young man, in order that she may the better pursue her plans for disposing of her niece. I, however, feel assured that all will end well; not only for the benefit of the young man, but for the happiness of his father, his mother, his Lucy, and his Sophia. Yet the trial is undoubtedly hard; it is an exercise of faith and trust in God which is beyond un-

assisted mortals. And the afflicted father, too! I was truly sorry to see how he received the shock: yet not a word of complaint, not a murmur, did he utter; but continued in his usual seat, silent and pale, as if subdued, broken down, and exhausted; his lips trembling, and his breast heaving with smothered groans.

He once or twice endeavoured to speak to me, but broke off short, and looked around as if for consolation. But, although we could sympathize with him, we could not console him. We were all in want of comfort ourselves; and who was to bestow that which all required? Yet, doubtless, we were all more or less influenced by a sense of religion; and, I trust, a deep and abiding assurance of the divine goodness has not been without its effect in softening the calamity, and in teaching us our duty to yield in silence, and to bend submissively beneath the storm.

Three days are past since the foregoing was written, and another letter from Theodore has arrived, producing at least this good effect, that we now know the

worst we have to expect. Theodore was in London when he wrote, preparing in all haste for his embarkation. He is to join Captain Clive in India, as soon as possible: and it is probable that he will enter into actual service immediately on his landing.

But I can add no more at present: no, I cannot describe the various scenes of woe through which I have passed in endeavouring to console my Lucy, my sweet Sophia, the tender father, and the indulgent mother, (for I can seldom recollect that Mrs. Beauchamp is only the *stepmother* of her husband's children.)

Another week is past: and where is our Theodore now? A letter, received this morning from Eugenius, who joined his friend in London, and accompanied him on board ship, gives us the last notices of our beloved one, previous to his departure. Had not my presence been so much required at Roxobel, I should undoubtedly have undertaken a journey to London; but, under existing circumstances, I could not be spared.

Eugenius describes his Theodore as having entered on his voyage under the impression of a speedy return, and animated by the brightest hopes. We had not rendered him unhappy, by making the worst of our miserable feelings; and yet, it appears, he more than once was nearly overcome in speaking of Roxobel, and its beloved inhabitants. It was, however, a great alleviation of his pain, that nothing had ever been revealed to him respecting what had happened between Eugenius and Sophia.

He spoke of Mrs. Winifred with a warmth of gratitude which, I think, she little merits; and forgot not to write to her in the most animated terms. In this letter, as Eugenius informed me, the young lieutenant mentioned his intended union with Miss Lovel as an affair supposed to be entirely agreeable to all parties, and as an object which Mrs. Winifred had been using all exertions to hasten, in the efforts which she had made to advance his promotion. I would have given a great deal to have seen the old lady open the letter; but this was not within the line of possibility.

A letter which Eugenius forwarded from Theodore to Lucy certainly had a considerable effect in restoring her spirits. It was full of ardent expressions of attachment; and might be said to have almost shone with the beaming expressions of his brightest hopes: together with which was mingled a certain tinge of heroism and contempt of danger, which has a tendency to render a man, who is amiable in other respects, most particularly pleasing in the eyes of a young lady of more enthusiasm than experience. Bright views of life are congenial with the temperament of my Lucy: and I believe that she has the power of imparting these fairer tints, in some degree at least, to those with whom she continually associates. Lucy, however, is not only naturally cheerful, but decidedly pious; that is, if true piety may be known by the fruits of peace, and hope, and charity, which it enables its children to produce: for where was so bright a union of these three celestial qualities ever manifested, as in the conduct of my lovely Lucy?

Several days are past, since I wrote the

last few lines. They were dictated in a somewhat more cheerful strain than many which preceded them: but I had scarcely concluded them, before I was called to Dr. Beauchamp, who had been seized with a fit, and was hardly restored to his recollection when I arrived at the parsonage.

Mr. Barnaby Semple was with him, and had taken a quantity of blood from his arm. His family were weeping around him; but Lucy had not yet heard of what had happened. However, after some hours, he revived; and Mr. Semple assured us, that the attack had been the effect of uneasiness of mind, and had no connexion with what we all dreaded, a paralytic stroke: but it appears, that the poor doctor will not be able to perform his duty for some time; which will occasion some difficulty, as there is no clergyman in the neighbourhood who can take it. O that our Eugenius were ordained! But what avail these fruitless wishes? Though I can do many things for my dear friend, yet I am not a clergyman; and we must have one at any rate. Mrs. Beauchamp has requested me

to go and make our difficulty known to the ladies of the Hall: I will do her bidding; but I almost dread any of Mrs. Winifred's counsels.

My dear Lucy was spared the alarm of seeing her adopted father at the worst: he is now easy, and his pious feelings are doing their best to bring him comfort. But I cannot write minutely: my thoughts are not sufficiently calm.—We have lately suffered blow after blow, with scarcely a breathing interval. Perhaps it is the will of the Almighty, that we should be brought low, in order to our ultimate exaltation; as the physician sometimes lowers the state of his patient, in order that he may raise him up in better health. May we then learn to submit, to lay our mouths in the dust, and be silent!

I went to Mrs. Winifred, this morning, by Mrs. Beauchamp's request, to speak about an assistant for Dr. Beauchamp. I had previously told Mrs. Beauchamp, decidedly, that I had no opinion of Mrs. Winifred, and should be disposed to think ill of any one recommended by her. But

Mrs. Beauchamp is not a woman of a strong character, and has great awe of Mrs. Winifred: I was therefore obliged to submit to her wishes, though contrary to my own judgment.

As to the poor doctor, he seems almost incapable of reflection; he has more than once addressed me as if I were actually in orders. "You will take care of my people, dear Mr. Airley?" he said. "I trust my poor people to you without anxiety: you will be tender of my lambs? you will lead my sheep in the way that they should go?"

"I will do what I can," was always my reply. Nevertheless, as the little man of Roxobel is not ordained, a curate must be procured. I accordingly went this morning to the Hall, and signified my desire of seeing Mrs. Winifred.

My message was carried to her; and at twelve o' clock, Mrs. Nuttall came to inform me, that her lady would grant me an audience. I would rather have been summoned by any other person: however, there was no remedy; and I followed the duenna

through several galleries and antechambers, till I arrived at the old lady's dressing-room; a small apartment, hung with fine gobelin tapestry, and having a toilet set out in great style between the windows, with draperies of silk and muslin, and a variety of Japan boxes, in black and gold, upon the toilet-table.

Mrs. Winifred, who had suffered from a cold, as she informed me, for several days, was sitting in this room, in a high-backed easy chair; opposite to which, another chair was placed for me. The old lady was dressed in a chintz gown and petticoat, with a small flounced apron, short sleeves, and long ruffles. She had a white kerchief pinned upon her shoulders, the two corners of which met and formed a point in front, a large bow or breast-knot being pinned across. Her hair was drawn up tight, over a cushion, by which her wired cap was elevated to a considerable height above her forehead, and she had a pair of knit silk mittens on her arms. Mrs. Winifred's face is generally sallow, but I thought it more so than usual to-day. She has strong features,

and a Roman nose, with high cheek-bones. Her eyes are small, grey, and piercing: but there is sense in her countenance, and such a dignity in her manner, that she may excite abhorrence, but hardly I think, contempt. The time was when I did not dislike her; but that time is past, and I must confess, that it was with no cordially friendly feelings, that I returned her compliments as she arose to receive me.

While I was seating myself, Mrs. Nuttall disappeared, and I was in hopes that we had got rid of her; for it was putting my politeness to the test, to be civil only to one of these old women: and I felt that I could not have put up with two at a time.

Mrs. Winifred opened the meeting by asking after young Mr. Beauchamp, and enquiring when we had heard from him.

I gave her a very short answer, and hastened to introduce the subject of my visit, informing her that I had been desired by Mrs. Beauchamp to call and consult with her respecting our difficulty; asking her if she knew any clergyman who was likely to be able to take the duty for a short time;

"for," as I added, "I trust that we shall not want any one for a long period."

The old lady made some pathetic speeches on the illness of the doctor, to which I could not answer, although I muttered some hard words between my teeth, which would not, I believe, have proved very acceptable to the old lady, had they found utterance. However, I succeeded quite as well in playing the hypocrite as Mrs. Winifred did. We both guessed each other's thoughts, I have no doubt; at least, the general tendency of them; and I will venture to say, that there was no love lost between us.

Had Mrs. Winifred been hasty in recommending any person, I should certainly have declined her proposal. On the contrary, however, she said, that she could not think of any clergyman who was at that time at liberty; yet remarked, that it would be a very awkward circumstance if one could not be speedily obtained. At length, raising her voice, she called Mrs. Nuttall, who immediately appeared from an inner door; and the old lady gave herself the

very unnecessary trouble of explaining our difficulty to her waiting-maid. I call it unnecessary trouble, inasmuch as it cannot be supposed, that the duenna had so far departed from the observances of females of her class, as to have omitted applying her ear to the key-hole, during my conference with her lady.

When the time was arrived in which the dame judged it proper to seem to understand what had passed, she enquired, "And what would you require of me, Ma'am?"

"To refresh my memory, and remind me of any worthy clergyman among our acquaintance, who may be in want of employment," returned Mrs. Winifred.

"Bless me, Ma'am," said Mrs. Nuttall, "why does not Mr. Airley write to Mr. Lovel to look out for one?"

This was a fair proposition, I thought, and at once satisfied me that Mrs. Nuttall had no clerical friend of her own whom she wanted to promote.

"Nay but, Nuttall," said Mrs. Winifred, "there is a person I have just thought of; it is poor Mr. Aprice."

"What, of Caerbrock?" said Mrs. Nuttall. "He won't do."

I liked him the better for not possessing Mrs. Nuttall's good will, and asked, "And why will he not do, Mrs. Nuttall?"

"He is poor, Sir," was her answer, "and a very plain sort of man; and his discourses are quite such as would suit the lower sort, and not fit for my lady to hear."

"Now, I don't see that, Nuttall," said Mrs. Winifred. "We don't want learned discourses at Roxobel. Good doctrine wants not the recommendation of fine language."

"Well," remarked Mrs. Nuttall, "I must say that I do like a genteel delivery. I like a smart looking man in the pulpit. Now, for instance, Mr. Lovel!—he is a man that would do honour to the cloth; but poor Mr. Aprice has none of this sort of smartness, though to be sure he is a good man enough."

"And would be very glad of any assistance," added Mrs. Winifred.

"Well, I hope," rejoined the duenna, "that you will not get him here; and I

am very sorry you ever thought of him, for he is no favourite of mine. But do you please to want any thing else of me?" she added, in a very pert voice.

"No, Nuttall," replied Mrs. Winifred.

The waiting-woman turned round with a whisk of her petticoat, which raised wind enough to set her mistress's lappets in motion, and turned out at the door from which she had entered; after which, Mrs. Winifred and I conversed a good deal about Mr. Aprice, to whom I had taken a fancy, seeing that he was so entirely out of Mrs. Nuttall's good books: and it was agreed that Mrs. Winifred should write to him, and enquire if he could undertake the duty of Roxobel for a short time; Mrs. Winifred adding, very kindly, that she would give him a room at the Hall, in order to make a better bargain for Dr. Beauchamp.

"Now, Heaven forgive me," thought I, as I was walking home, "if I have wronged this woman by my suspicions. What has passed this morning has given me rather a better opinion of her."

CHAPTER XIV.

A VISIT TO THE GIPSY-WOOD.

MANY weeks, yea some months, are expired since our Theodore sailed. We know that we could not yet have received any intelligence from him from India; but yet we feel the time long. Christmas is past, but past without any of the cheerfulness of the season, and the spring is approaching, and the green leaves unfolding themselves; but it is not given us to hail the coming summer with joyful anticipations.

Eugenius did not return to us at Christmas: he remained at Oxford, studying hard for his degree, and was, I think, glad of the excuse which this circumstance afforded him, of not returning to Roxobel. The poor doctor still seems in

a declining state of health: he keeps his chamber almost continually; but we all endeavour to render it cheerful to him. He is evidently growing in grace under affliction. He has been able, as he assures us, to commit his Theodore to God, and to lay the concerns of his other children at the foot of the cross. And although we cannot call him cheerful, yet he is serene and composed; and informs us, that he has experienced, in the retirement and quiet of his chamber, a frequency of the divine presence which he never knew before.

"It appears," remarked this excellent man, "that when our brightest earthly comforts are cast into obscurity, the prospect of heavenly blessedness, and of divine benevolence, displays a greater degree of brilliancy: and in such seasons, the exalted spirit of the believer ceases to live by faith, and begins, as it were, to live by sight. Do not call me unhappy, my friends; for I have been made to rejoice in tribulation. It is tribulation that worketh patience; patience, experience; and experience, hope."

Such is the happy state of our dear pastor; and his sweet daughter participates, to a great extent, in his holy frame of mind.

My Lucy continues her daily visits to Mrs. Judy's apartment: but, from Mr. Barnaby Semple's account, she will not have this duty to perform for any great length of time, since the good lady is declining; not, indeed, in consequence of age, for she is still under sixty, but in consequence of an immoderate use of drugs, and the repeated application of severe medicines to fancied diseases. And although, for the last ten years, Mr. Barnaby Semple has endeavoured, as much as possible, to counteract this strange propensity, yet he assures me, that it is a matter of wonder to him that the poor lady has lived so long. My fair Lucy was very much affected, the other day, when Mr. Semple, in Dr. Beauchamp's chamber, hinted that he thought Mrs. Judy could not long continue. We were all astonished at the natural yet strong expression of her sorrow, and were surprised to perceive how love

towards her poor aunt had sprung up in her heart, in the exercise of her duty. I believe that if Lucy has any influence with Mrs. Judy, Mr. Barnaby Semple will be the better for it at the old lady's death, for Lucy thinks of every one. She exhibits a sort of universal kindness, which sheds its benevolent influences on all within her reach.

I can remember the time, since I came to Roxobel, when every thing passed so smoothly, that a walk in a wood, or even the appearance of a fresh-blown rose, was an event. My pilgrimage then lay along a smooth and verdant lawn, in which I found no more irregularities than were necessary to diversify and adorn the scene before me. In the distant landscape were spread regions of delight, in which I fancied that I saw the children whom I loved acting each their happy part, lovely and beloved, and surrounded by their little ones. But, ah! how changed is my situation now! My path now lies through dark and dismal valleys, and I meet with a stumbling-stone at every step. The past bright visions of

hope have faded away; my children are scattered; their smiles have departed; and every object I behold seems to remind me that all on earth is vanity.

But why should I yield to this melancholy train of thoughts? Does not my religion still remain? and is not perfect happiness implied in that single word—*religion?*

But this Mr. Aprice, this curate!—I have been fairly (or, rather, I should say foully) taken in—outwitted by the duenna; and so outwitted! and while I thought myself so clever! Let me look back at my own expressions, which are to this effect:—"I am satisfied that Mrs. Nuttall has no clerical friend of her own whom she desires to promote;" "I liked Mr. Aprice the better for not possessing Mrs. Nuttall's good will;" "I have taken a fancy to Mr. Aprice, seeing he is so entirely out of Mrs. Nuttall's good books;" and so on.

Henceforward, thou little vain man of Roxobel, build no longer on thy wisdom. But was not Solomon himself deceived by women? Why, I am greatly mistaken if

this identical Mr. Aprice is not a first cousin of the aforesaid Mrs. Nuttall. He has the very same cast of features: but, whereas she is sallow, he is rubicund; and whereas she is thin and gaunt, he, like the celebrated Juggernaut, might be represented by two eggs placed one above another. But I will not dilate on his appearance; for I am getting ill-natured. But to see such a man in the pulpit after Dr. Beauchamp! Well, perhaps he will do less harm than if he were a few shades better. I have often thought, that a decidedly bad minister does less mischief than one who is decent, but who yet preaches false doctrine. It is not when Satan shews his horns and cloven foot, that he is most to be dreaded.

Mr. Aprice has his room at the Hall, and his chair at the housekeeper's table; and he smokes his pipe, and drinks his glass every afternoon, with Mr. Porter, in the butler's room; and goes a shooting and fishing with Taffy. How are we to get rid of him? I see but two ways of accomplishing this; either Eugenius must get ordained, or our poor pastor must get bet-

ter: but both of these alternatives seem at a distance.

Since the commencement of spring, my Lucy has been exposed to new trials. Mrs. Winifred has taken it into her head, for reasons, no doubt, of her own, (since, like the lady described in the Spectator, she can hardly take a dish of tea without a stratagem,) to affect excessive fondness for her niece, taking her out with her several times in her garden-chair, to take the air about the park, and in various other directions. Lucy is so unsuspicious, so placable, and so easily deceived by appearances, never troubling herself to search for any motives beyond those which are most clearly obvious, that, although she may have sometimes spoken of Mrs. Winifred's conduct as if it were designing and had some hidden aim, yet the first kind word which she has afterwards received from her aunt, has served to dissipate all suspicions, and to restore her confidence. Mrs. Winifred can make herself agreeable when she chooses; and Lucy has returned in spirits from one or two of these airings. However, I must confess,

that I have not approved of these excursions; and I have accordingly resolved that I will have my eyes about me; for since I have been so much cajoled respecting the curate, I am become even more suspicious of foul dealings than I was before.

Since the illness of poor Dr. Beauchamp, I have thought it right to be more frequent in my visits to the cottages and farmhouses. I cannot, it is true, baptize or bury, but I can pray with the sick, endeavour to comfort the sad, and advise with the distressed; and I am not likely to be disturbed in these duties by Mr. Aprice.

However, as I have often to go to the very extent of the parish, I have provided myself with a little quiet pony; which, though very small, is in no danger of having his back broken by my weight: and if I sometimes choose to ride in the direction which Mrs. Winifred's garden-chair may have taken, or to meet it on its return, it is an event which may very well happen in such a place as Roxobel, where the roads intersect each other in many places. And when I do meet the old lady, I generally

find something polite to say to her: and thus hitherto all has passed smoothly, and I have not heard that Mrs. Winifred has made any remark upon these meetings.

The last day that Lucy was out with her aunt, and I also was taking my ride, as they entered the park on one side, I contrived to cross over in a different direction, for I have had leave to ride in the park for some years past. I directed my course towards some of the higher grounds, where I thought that I should at least obtain a sight of the carriage in its progress under the shade of the Torville woods, though it would not of course be perceptible within their boundary. I was thus proceeding, when I suddenly met Master Taffy, dressed in a handsome riding-suit, and well mounted. He started a little on seeing me, and asked where I had picked up that rare piece of horse-flesh which carried me.

"Don't you admire my horse, Mr. David?" I enquired.

"That is as may be," replied the youth, grinning; "but which way may you be going, Mr. Airley?"

"That is as may be, Mr. David," I answered.

Taffy then turned the head of his horse, and giving me a nod, rode off; but looked back several times to observe me. Before he was out of sight, the carriage appeared; and I verily believe, that my presence alone prevented him from following it, for he immediately rode off in full gallop, in another direction.

I was afraid of seeming too often in the way; and the next day, therefore, went quite out of the line of any carriage-road, and paid a visit to my family at the Rock Hamlet.

I did not see Miss Lucy in the morning, while I was in the library; but when I was at dinner, I received a little note from her, asking me to walk with her to the parsonage in the afternoon.

I saw immediately, when I met her in the park, that something unpleasant had happened; for her colour was raised, and she spoke in a hurried manner: she, however, did not explain herself, till we were at some distance from the boundaries of the

Hall gardens, and then, when we had reached a clear and open space, she said, "Mr. Airley, I think my aunt Winifred is quite mad."

"And wherefore, my dear Miss Lucy?" I asked.

"You shall hear," she answered. "This morning we set out to take an airing, my aunt and myself. We went down into the high road, and passed under the woods, and through the turnpike, and up to Burrow-Town.

"When I asked my aunt what was the object of her drive, she replied, 'To carry some medicine to one of the gipsies who is ill.'

"'That is kind, aunt,' I answered; 'but why do you not compel these poor creatures, either to live in houses, or to leave the country; for they are really a nuisance to all honest people.'

"She was rather offended at this; and said a great deal respecting the extraordinary wisdom of these people, and their peculiar skill in predicting future events.

"I saw that she was not in a humour to

bear to be argued with, and therefore I made no answer.

"Having passed through Burrow-Town, we came to the little deep lane which leads to the gipsy-wood.

"'You would not choose to go in the carriage down this lane, surely, Madam!' said the servant who drives the garden-chair.

"'Yes, I would,' returned my aunt; 'and if you are afraid, get off, and lead the horse.'

"With the exception of a few jolts, we got to the coppice without difficulty," continued Miss Lucy; "and there my aunt and I got out, and we walked on to the gipsy's encampment. It was pitched in a very dark part of the wood; and there we found an old woman stretched under one of the tents, and looking ill. My aunt put into her hand what we had brought for her, and then asked for her daughter Nelly.

"While we were speaking, Nelly stood by our side, having issued from some dark corner, and having approached with noiseless steps."

"I started a little when I saw her," proceeded Lucy; "and she then began to pour out such a torrent of gipsy gibberish, replete with that gross flattery which the lowest of the people use where they think it will be acceptable, that it was with some difficulty I prevented myself from telling her to hold her peace. However, as my aunt was with me, I was silent. At length, my aunt, having asked some questions of the sick person, and having given her some directions, turned to Nelly, and said, 'This niece of mine will not believe that your people have any real knowledge of future things, Nelly?'

"'That comes,' answered the hollow voice of the person who lay within the tent, 'from the dark state of her own mind. Where the sense of sight has not been given, light shines in vain. But believe, or not believe, as you will, Miss. Fate is fixed, and cannot change: the fairest lady in Roxobel is given to the heir of the Helmsleys; and those that would hinder shall not prevail.'

"'I shall be in better humour with you presently,' I replied, 'if you tell me such

news as this. Come, now tell me something else.'

"'I am restrained,' said the hag, lifting up her hollow eyes. 'But go home, and if a letter is given you this evening, mark well the surname of the person that signs it; for it is not that by which you will ever be known.'

"Now," added Miss Lucy, "I will confess that I am foolish enough to wish that I may not have a letter from Theodore this evening."

"And this proves," I answered, "that we ought not to tamper with these forbidden things; for predictions of this kind always affect the mind, in a greater or less degree. Yet, I do not blame you, my dear Miss Lucy, in this instance: I only speak of the general effect of such things."

Lucy expressed her acquiescence in what I had said, and then proceeded with her story. "I was surprised," she said, "to find that my aunt was by no means offended at the gipsy's intimation respecting the marriage of Sophia and Eugenius—the fairest lady in Roxobel, and the heir of the

Helmsleys. I thought that this would have affected her, but it did not appear to make the least unfavourable impression on her: for, on the contrary, she appeared to be perfectly satisfied; and she gave the gipsy a handsome present before we came away.

"Well, dear Mr. Airley," continued the young lady, "we were to have more adventures. When we came out of the wood, we found Taffy standing with the servants and the carriage, having given his horse to the footman. Mrs. Winifred did not express any surprise at seeing him. 'I am going to drive you home,' he said, without adding a name or title of any kind.

"'No, no, David!' cried Mrs. Winifred; 'I will not trust my neck to your care.'

"'Nor I either,' I added.

"'Won't you, Miss?' he replied; 'then belike you must walk home, for I am bent upon driving the chair.'

"Mrs. Winifred demurred: and the old coachman was getting into his seat, when Taffy, half roughly, and half playfully, pulled him back, and mounted in his place.

'Now, Mrs. Winifred,' he said, 'get in, and see how I can drive.'

"Mrs. Winifred complained and expostulated, as a nurse would do with a spoiled child whom she did not dare to whip; but at the same time stepped into the carriage, saying, 'Come, Lucy, let us try Taffy's skill.'

"At first I refused to comply; but the old lady grew angry, and insisted on obedience: so that, at length, I placed myself by her side, though in a very ill humour.

"In the bad road between the coppice and the village we had several severe jolts; but after we had reached the smooth green of the common, Taffy shewed off in high style, making the quiet horse to bestir himself in good earnest. We were presently at the turnpike; and then he turned and gave us an airing over the common for more than a mile.

"During this time, I did not speak a word. At length, Mrs. Winifred said, 'Does not he drive well?'

"'He ought!' I replied, 'for he was reared in the stables.'

"She was not pleased at this answer, and said, 'Lucy, you never speak kindly of your old companion.'

"'I speak of him as he deserves,' I answered: 'I do not like him; he is too forward.'

"'I don't see that,' she replied; 'he looks on us as on his oldest friends.'

"To this I made no reply; and we proceeded in silence till we came to a wide and easy road, when our driver tightened the reins, put his horse to a walk, and, leaning back from his seat, asked me how I liked him for a coachman.

"'Mr. Nuttall,' I answered, 'you had better mind your horse, or we shall be overturned.'

"'Overturned!' he repeated; 'what, in this place, where it is as smooth as a bowling-green?"

"I continued silent.

"'Mrs. Winifred!' said he, reddening, 'I wish you would read Miss Lovel a lecture on pride. The young ladies in these days can't speak a civil word to any one, unless it may be to some particular prime

favourite, some blade with sword and sash: all the rest may be hanged or drowned for what they care.'

"To this impertinent speech I made no answer: but Mrs. Winifred said, 'Come, David, come; you must not think to please ladies by reproving them. And why should you put Miss Lucy in mind of persons whom she is trying to forget? Lucy is a good girl, and always was conformed to her aunt's will; and she shall be none the worse for it, I assure her:'—and so saying, she laid her hand on mine.

"'Aunt Winifred,' I said, and I am sure I looked red, for I was very angry—'please to understand me. I do not want any thing from you but your affection as a very near relation: I want no money, no lands, no jewels, no property or possessions of any sort. I have quite as much of all these things as I shall ever want. And, with respect to any man, of any rank whatever, trying to win my regard beyond good will, I wish it to be known from henceforward that it will be all lost

labour, for I am bound to one, and to that one I will be constant, and that because I cannot help it. I am not proud, Mr. Nuttall,' I added, for the young man was looking very hard in my face; 'but I would have you understand, once for all, that even if you were in possession of three kingdoms, I would have nothing to say to you.'

"'You would not, Miss?' cried David.

"'No,' I replied. 'I wish you well, and never will be your enemy; and should like you very well, if you would but keep your place: but it is of no manner of use for you to try to please me, for you never will succeed.'

"'And who says I want to please you, Miss?' he asked.

"'I have spoken my mind, Mr. Nuttall,' I answered; 'and I have had my reasons for so doing. It is always best, I think, for people to understand each other; for it prevents a great deal of confusion: and now there can be no mistake.'

"'Lucy,' said Mrs. Winifred, 'you have a strange manner of expressing yourself.

Why should you be so rude to the young man, your old friend?'

"'I did not mean to be rude,' I answered.

"'But you have been both rude and unkind,' returned Mrs. Winifred. 'Give him your hand, and say you are sorry.'

"'Very willingly,' I rejoined. I accordingly gave my hand to Taffy, and said, 'Mr. Nuttall, you and I were brought up under one roof, and I wish you well, with all my heart; and I wish you may be a worthy and then you will be a happy man: and don't ask of me more than I can grant, and I will be a friend to you as long as I live.'

"David gave me his hand, and the poor young man changed countenance, and, for the time, seemed to be under the influence of some gentle feelings; and I thought of what Dr. Beauchamp has often observed, that every thing has been done to render him worthless, and nothing has been done for his benefit.

"After this, no more was said, but he turned round and urged his horse to a

more rapid motion: and when I next looked at Mrs. Winifred, the tears were running down her cheeks in large drops. And I could have wept too," added the sweet young lady, "though I hardly knew why.

"We did not speak again, however, till we arrived at the Hall."

"Well, my dear Lucy," I replied, when she had concluded her narration, "Mrs. Winifred is an enigma. It is very certain that, for some hidden reason which we cannot divine, she is anxious to marry you to Taffy. I have long suspected it; but what this reason is, still remains a secret: yet it will some time or other appear; and we must watch her well, and guard against her manœuvres. And permit me to remark, that there is only one way of effectually confounding crooked devices, and that is, by having no devices at all: nothing baffles an artful person so completely as perfect candour and openness."

"Well," remarked Lucy, "then Mrs. Winifred and I are fairly matched; for I have scarcely discretion enough to hide a single thought, and I believe that she hardly ever

shews herself as she really is. But perhaps we are both in extremes: and without your counsels and watchfulness, my dear Mr. Airley, I know that I should be in great danger."

Thus concluded our conversation, and we finished the evening at the parsonage.

CHAPTER XV.

BLACK TOM.

THE moment I entered the library of the Hall, on the morning subsequent to Mrs. Winifred and Lucy's visit to the gipsies, Miss Lucy ran in to shew me a letter from her beloved Theodore, dated from the Cape of Good Hope, and written in excellent spirits.

"How, Sir," said Lucy, "could the gipsy have known that I was to have a letter last night?"

"I don't know how," I replied. "But these people are very cunning: and who knows but that this very letter was in Mrs. Winifred's pocket at the very time the prediction was made? However, from this circumstance, I am more and more convinced of a combination between the

witches in the Hall, and the witches in the wood. But, fair lady, remember that you have a dwarf and an enchanter on your side; and, if they have their predictions and omens, we also have our tokens for good, namely, words of comfort from the Cape of Good Hope. Do not all the Indian letters come by that cape? At any rate, our Theodore is well, by the last account. Assume therefore, lady, your bonnet, your cloak, your clogs, your pattens, or whatever else ladies put on when they take the air, and away to the parsonage, with this cordial drop for the poor doctor and our sweet Sophia."

Lucy and I had a delightful walk to the parsonage; our hearts being warm with gratitude and love towards the Dispenser of all good, and the air being fragrant and balmy with the breath of many opening buds.

On my return to my lodgings just before dinner, Mrs. Strickland informed me, that Mr. Barnaby Semple had been sent for to Black Tom, who had been taken dangerously ill. I therefore determined, after my

dinner, to take a ride to the Tower. I had never given up the belief, that there was something in Black Tom, which, one time or other, would turn out well; or rather, that this same wild man would eventually make it appear that he was an object of the divine mercy. Actuated by this persuasion, I mounted my little pony, and took my way across the park, to the Warrener's Tower.

On approaching the Tower, I found the door open, and saw two or three men drinking at a round table within the hall. These were shouting, swearing, and betting;—for the first words I heard were, "I'll bet you a crown!" Among them I observed the miller and the gamekeeper; which last differed little from the miller, excepting in one particular, that whereas the former was a young, or at any rate a middle-aged rogue, the latter was an old one, and, if possible, more hardened in his evil ways, though he could put a better face upon his bad practices, and knew how to conduct himself more discreetly in the presence of his betters.

I immediately perceived that my visit

was by no means acceptable to the company; for the men arose, and looked embarrassed as soon as I appeared, with the exception of the miller, who, still keeping his seat, said, "Your servant, Sir. Tom was calling for you but now."

"And why did you not send for me then, Mr. Tolly?" I asked.

The miller made no answer: on which, addressing myself to James Stephens, I said, "Shew me the sick man." I spoke gravely, and with authority; and the gamekeeper, putting on his most civil face, immediately conducted me to a pointed door in the wall, which opened upon an exceedingly steep and winding staircase.

"I reckon," said the miller, laughing, "that you will find them stairs hard to climb, Mr. Airley; for I sometimes counts them somewhat difficult with my long legs."

"My legs may be short, Mr. Tolly," I answered, "but my will is good. Some people always find the way hard which leads to a companion in distress."

"There now," said the gamekeeper,

"there now, Tolly; Mr. Airley has the best of it: it does not do to be passing your jokes upon him, I can tell you; you may be the best at a right-forward push, but Mr. Airley's the man for a side-thrust."

I did not hear the miller's answer, for I was busied in scrambling up the stairs, a task which I found to be attended with more difficulty than I had expected, as they were excessively steep. At length, having reached the top, I entered a wide, gloomy chamber, illuminated only by narrow slips of windows, which had evidently been arrow-slits. The roof of this apartment was high, and not ceiled; the walls were bare and discoloured; and there was little furniture, but a large chest, and the bed on which poor Tom lay.

The poor man was very ill, being apparently in a high fever; and an old woman, whom I had seen at Burrow-Town, was giving him something in a horn cup, which savoured of rum. On the chest before mentioned, were the phials containing Mr. Semple's medicines, which appeared to be yet unopened.

"What are you giving the poor man?" I said to the woman.

"Nothing, Sir," she answered, setting down the cup under the bed.

I immediately stepped forward, seized the cup before she was aware, and threw its contents into the chimney. I then took up one of the phials, on which was written, "To be taken immediately," and, emptying it into the horn cup, I advanced to poor Tom, directed the woman to raise his head, and held the cup to him to drink.

When thus disturbed, he began to groan and swear; but I spoke decidedly to him, and he then swallowed the potion: and looking up at me, he said, "Is it you, Mr. Airley? thank God, you are come: send that old woman out of the room."

"You must go for a little while, dame," I said to the woman: "Tom has something to say to me in private." With that I saw her out of the room, and drew a bolt upon her. Then returning to the sick man, I informed him that we were alone.

"Sir," said he, "my sins are now visit-

ing me. Here I am a dying man, and have nothing but thieves and rogues about me. Well, Sir, it's my own fault: a man must reap as he sows. But, Sir, I have had many thoughts, ever since I first saw you in this Tower. Your words, Sir, which you spoke then, sunk as lead into my heart. I never forgot them, Sir: but it is no easy matter, when a man has got himself tied and entangled, as one may say, with bad company and a bad conscience, to get free. But now, Mr. Airley, they will leave me to die. Here I have been lying these three days, and they have not sent for the doctor: and he tells me he should not have come now, if young Taylor had not chanced to call here this morning; though he did not come up to me, for they frightened him about the fever. And they have got the key of the drink: and there they are roaring and singing all day, and all night too. Oh, Sir! and the worst is, that it is all my own fault."

"And what can I do, Tom?" I asked.

"Why, Sir, if you would send for my brother from the other side of the country; if you would write a bit of a letter

for me, and be so good as to send a man over;—(it is about six miles from this;)—why, Sir, you would do me the greatest favour in the world." And the poor man told me where to find a pen and ink, and a piece of paper, and how to direct the letter; and I did as he desired. I tore a leaf out of an account-book which was in the chest, and produced an inkhorn and the stump of a pen from the till of the same piece of furniture. I also found a purse there, containing several guineas and a few shillings, which I took to the poor man, counting the money before him. He asked me to be so good as to put it into my pocket, which I thought right to do, giving him a receipt for the amount: and then, having finished my letter, I went down stairs, but found no one in the house but the old woman.

"Where are your master's keys?" I enquired.

She handed them to me.

"Now, let me see you lock up the door of the cellar," I said; "but first put in all these cans and bottles."

She did as I desired.

"And now," I added, "give me the keys, and go down to the turnpike, and tell one of the people to come up to me."

She answered, that she could not leave the house.

"You will do as I bid you," I said, "or I will make your wicked conduct known to Mr. Barnaby Semple, and he shall engage Mrs. Judy to turn you out of your cottage."

On hearing this, she was preparing to obey, when the smiling face of Robert Taylor appeared at the door.

"Keep your distance, young man," I said; "there is fever in the house: but take my horse, and ride off till you can find some one to carry this letter as directed."

He took the letter, and looked at it, and then said, "Shall I take it myself, Mr. Airley?"

"The best of messengers," I answered. "And if you know of any worthy old woman who will not drench the sick man with ardent spirits, send her here with all speed."

The youth sprang upon the steed, and rode away; while I, taking a stool from the

hall, and setting it without the door, sat down with a book in my hand, resolving to maintain my post till the arrival of some auxiliaries.

It was well that the eyes of the old woman had not that power which is ascribed to the optics of some young ladies; otherwise, there would have been a speedy end to the history and exploits of the little man of Roxobel: for, as the hag retreated towards the staircase, she shot eye-beam after eye-beam upon me with the rapidity and the harmlessness of lightning upon ice.

"Go up stairs," I said, "and open as many casements as you can find in the sick man's room, and get a slice of toasted bread, and put it into a gallon of water, and give it him to drink; and if I smell another drop of rum, I will hang you to the smoke-jack, and suspend you over the fire."

While thus issuing my orders, I caught a glance of a ragged petticoat among the shafts of the fir-trees. It was Nelly, who was coming forward with a stealing step; but, on seeing me, she started, and would

have retreated, no doubt, had there remained an opportunity of doing so without my observation.

"O, Sir!" she said, courtesying: "are you here, Sir? I was coming to see if I could be of any service. How is the master now, Sir?"

I had scarcely heard her out, and was thinking whether I should treat her with civility or bid her depart, when the sound of several voices at a little distance met my ear: on which I immediately retreated into the house, the gipsy following me, and, closing the door after me, I drew the bolt.

We were scarcely ensconced within the Tower before the voices became louder, and I presently distinguished those of David Nuttall and Mr. Aprice.

"I say, Aprice," said David.

"Humph," cried the other.

"They ought to be here by this time. What's o'clock, parson?"

"Five by the Hall," was the reply. "But how is this—the door is shut, and bolted within?"

With that, the two heroes struck the door with such violence, that they would assuredly have broken it down had it not been constructed of heart of oak, clamped with iron. And such was the thunder of their blows, together with their noisy shouts and halloos, that they might even have served to awaken the Seven Sleepers.

In the mean time, the gipsy and the other old woman stood silently looking on, and, I have no doubt, they would have opened the door had it been merely bolted: but the troublesome little man had turned the lock, and put the key in his pocket; and, notwithstanding his diminutive appearance, the two women did not dare to touch him.

At length, the assailants being tired, raised the siege; and I climbed into a window, and watched their retreat till they had crossed the stile which leads into the park. I then addressed the gipsy, saying, "I shall let you out now, good woman, and do not let me hear of you again in this place." So I opened the door, and dismissed her.

I remained with poor Tom till his brother came, about eight in the evening. He seemed to be a steady sort of man, and readily undertook to stay at the Tower for a few days. A woman also, whom young Taylor had procured in a neighbouring village to nurse the sick man, came the same night. I therefore dismissed the former nurse, delivered the keys to poor Tom's brother, together with a little money for immediate expences, and, promising to revisit the invalid very shortly, I returned to my lodgings.

Mr. Barnaby Semple, on whom I called in my way home, assured me that there was nothing infectious in the disease of Black Tom; and, being satisfied in this respect, I retired to rest.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARBOUR.

I WAS going to the Hall from my own house yesterday morning, and was passing slowly beneath one of the embowered walks, when, coming opposite to an arbour of lattice-work, of which there are many in the garden, I there perceived the two younger Mrs. Helmsleys, seated in great state, and as near to each other as the circumferences of their whalebone petticoats would permit. They were dressed exactly alike, being attired very much in the fashion which I have described as constituting the costume of their elder sister. They were each busily employed with a knotting-shuttle, and were keeping excellent time together in the performance of their various evolutions. My respect for

these two younger sisters, or rather my regard, has been gradually on the increase ever since I first became acquainted with them; while that regard which I had indulged towards Mrs. Winifred has diminished in an inverse ratio.

On seeing these two breathing and knotting figures, I made one of my handsomest bows. I have been admired for my bows. Indeed, I am said to bow gracefully: and when I bow to ladies, I always accompany the compliment with a smile. I have sometimes thought of having my picture drawn while thus bowing and smiling.

The ladies rose from their seats, and returned my salutation in due form, sinking and rising at the same instant; and then with one voice bidding me a good morning, they invited me into the bower. I accepted the invitation, and took my place by them at a respectful distance.

A very interesting conversation then ensued; part of which I shall here relate in the form of a dialogue.

Mrs. Grizzy. A fine day, Mr. Airley.

Mrs. Judy. Day, Mr. Airley.

Mr. Airley. A perfect May-day, Mrs. Grizzy.—A perfect May-day, Mrs. Judy.

Mrs. Grizzy. The wind in the south, Sir?

Mrs. Judy. In the south, Sir?

Mr. Airley. South-west by west, I rather think, Mrs. Grizzy.—South-west by west, I rather think, Mrs. Judy.

Mrs. Grizzy. You are out betimes this morning, Mr. Airley.

Mrs. Judy. Betimes this morning, Mr. Airley.

Mr. Airley. I am always an early riser, Mrs. Grizzy.—A very early riser, Mrs. Judy.

Mrs. Grizzy. My father used to say—

> "Early to bed, and early to rise,
> Is the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise."

Mrs. Judy. "Healthy, wealthy, and wise."

Mr. Airley. A wise saying, Mrs. Grizzy.—A very wise saying, Mrs. Judy.

My memory is so treacherous that I cannot charge it with any more of our discourse, for which I am truly sorry, on account of posterity; but we carried it on

very well for ten minutes or more, and might have succeeded in prolonging it still further, had we not been interrupted by an accession of visiters to the arbour. These were Mrs. Winifred and Miss Lucy, the former of whom was leaning on the arm of the latter.

Mrs. Winifred rather started when brought within view of us by a sudden turn of the pathway: but Lucy smiled, and handed her aunt into the arbour with her accustomed grace.

I saw, however, notwithstanding the sweet and easy manner of Miss Lovel, that something unpleasant had passed between her and her aunt; for Mrs. Winifred's colour was raised, and her lip quivered: and she had scarcely sat a moment, before Mrs. Grizzy unintentionally touched the string which jarred, by saying, "Don't you take an airing to-day, sister Winifred?"

"An airing to-day, sister Winifred?" repeated Mrs. Judy.

"No," replied Mrs. Winifred; "Lucy does not choose to go with me."

"Not choose to go with you?" asked Mrs. Grizzy.

"Not choose to go with you?" added Mrs. Judy.

"No," replied Mrs. Winifred, pursing up her mouth; "she does not choose to go."

"How is this, Miss?" asked Mrs. Grizzy.

Mrs. Judy, contrary to her usual custom, did not repeat her sister's words.

Lucy smiled, rather sorrowfully than saucily, but did not speak.

Mrs. Grizzy repeated her question: "How comes it, Miss, that you don't choose to go out in the carriage with Mrs. Winifred, when she is so good as to offer to take you?"

"Because, aunt Grizzy," said Miss Lucy, "I do not like Taffy's company; and he will go with us."

"Taffy Nuttall! Does Taffy Nuttall go with you, sister Winifred?" exclaimed Mrs. Grizzy. "Then I am sure that Miss Lovel judges very properly in not bearing you company." And she drew herself up, and looking at Mrs. Judy, she said, "Don't you think so, sister Judy?"

"I do," returned Mrs. Judy; "and I must say, that I wonder much at you, sister Winifred, for allowing such liberties to your servant's nephew. But you, sister Winifred, are to do as you please, and no one has any right to blame you: but as to my niece, Miss Lovel, I must say that I admire her discretion; and I do say, that if you choose to encourage that young fellow about you, you cannot be surprised if you are left to take your airings by yourself." So speaking, she raised her head to an unusual elevation, and, having recovered herself with a short cough or two, she called on Mrs. Grizzy to deliver her opinion on the subject in debate.

"Sister Winifred," observed Mrs. Grizzy, on being thus appealed to, "I cannot but say that I am altogether of my sister Judy's way of thinking: and I must add, that this is not the first time that I have been surprised at the favour you, sister Winifred, have chosen to shew to those Nuttalls. No doubt you have a right to select your own servants, and to do as you please with regard to them: but it

ought to be remembered, that something is due to your family, to your sisters, to your niece, and to your nevy; and it should also be considered, that when you suffer your servants to take liberties in the presence of your relations, you are forgetting the respect due to those relations."

During this conversation, I was first made aware that the Nuttalls had been a bone of contention between the sisters for some years past; and that the two younger ladies and the elder always seemed to change characters whenever this subject was brought forward, Mrs. Winifred becoming tame and spiritless, and the others animated and rational.

Much as I was interested in knowing the issue of this dispute, it however occurred to me that I was one too many in the arbour on this occasion: and I was accordingly rising to take my leave, when Mrs. Judy and Mrs. Grizzy requested me to sit down again, adding, "We consider you, Mr. Airley, as being one of the family; we have nothing to say, but what you might hear."

"No, Mr. Airley," remarked Mrs. Winifred, "we have no secrets among us that I know of, nor any subjects of dispute excepting my maid Nuttall, whom my sisters don't like; and I am very well contented that they should not. I only require of them the same charity which I use towards their women, both of whom are as little agreeable to me as Nuttall is to them. But I never interfere with their servants, or give my opinion about them: and I think that the forbearance which I exercise towards Badger, my sister Grizzy's maid, and Susan Holloway, my sister Judy's attendant, ought at least to be extended to my maid Nuttall, who is the most attached creature upon earth."

"Let your maid keep her proper place, as ours do," said Mrs. Grizzy, "and we shall find no fault with her."

"As ours do, and we shall find no fault with her," repeated Mrs. Judy.

"And pray, sister Grizzy, sister Judy," said Mrs. Winifred, firing, "and pray, when and where does my maid step out of her place?"

"When she comes into your dressing-room before us all," said Mrs. Grizzy.

"Before us all," re-echoed Mrs. Judy.

"And gives her opinion unasked, undesired," proceeded Mrs. Grizzy.

"Unasked, undesired," reiterated Mrs. Judy.

"And when does she do so?" asked Mrs. Winifred, trembling with passion.

"How would you take such familiarity, sister Winifred," asked Mrs. Grizzy, "from Betty Badger?"

"Betty Badger?" repeated Mrs. Judy.

"And is not Betty Badger as good any day in the week as Penelope Nuttall?" added Mrs. Grizzy, in high displeasure. "Was not Nuttall's brother a footman, brought up in the butler's room, through our father's charity? and did he not drink himself to the grave in the flower of life? And did you not take Taffy, his son, from the extremest misery, to bring him up at the Hall?"

"Well, and where is the harm of that?" returned Mrs. Winifred. "Do you grudge the poor boy his maintenance, sister Grizzy?

But it is enough that any one should possess my good will, for you to become his enemy."

"Grudge him his maintenance!" exclaimed Mrs. Grizzy, her voice gathering sharpness as the dispute became more violent; "how can you, an Helmsley, conceive so low an opinion of another Helmsley, as to suppose she could grudge a poor boy his maintenance?" and she took her knotting-bag, and fanned herself with it. "But people now-a-days have such extraordinary ideas! And so, because I don't like to see Master Taffy Nuttall, the son of a drunken footman, set up, with his watch-chain, and his powdered hair, and his silver buckles, and his silk waistcoat, and his saddle-horse, and his superfine coat, and his eye-glass, and I know not what;—because, forsooth, I don't like to see him set up above my own nevy, Master Eugenius Lovel;—why I am to be accused of grudging a poor boy his victuals and drink!"

"Nay, sister Grizzy," interrupted Mrs. Judy, "don't be so warm."

"Yes, but I will," answered Mrs. Grizzy; "and I say that Mrs. Winifred is quite infatuated with these Nuttalls."

"Well, and why mayn't I have my favourites, sister Grizzy, as well as other folks?" said Mrs. Winifred. "Is it not quite as rational to make a pet of a poor orphan boy, as of a vile dog all covered with sores?"

"I don't see, sister Winifred," retorted Mrs. Grizzy, "what right you have to throw your aspersions on me. My poor little dog troubles no one but myself, and those who are paid for waiting on him; and that cannot be said of the puppy you have taken into favour."

The altercation between the spinsters was now becoming so sharp, that I almost dreaded lest it might end in something more than words; for the hands were raised and flourished, and every head trembled and shook as if seized with a paralytic affection.

Lucy, however, who, as she afterwards informed me, had frequently witnessed scenes of this description, seemed to have

to get some water to throw in Mrs. Winifred's face, when Mrs. Nuttall appeared, with hartshorn, volatile salts, burnt feathers, and such other articles as females are wont to produce on such occasions.

It was not anger in the positive but in the superlative degree, which affected the features of the duenna as she entered the bower. She actually trembled with rage: and, as she approached her mistress, and lifted her head from Lucy's lap, she said, "Get out of the way, Miss, and let me come at my lady." Then turning to me, and looking down upon me with extreme contempt, "What have you been doing?" she asked. "You will be the death of my poor lady, and then you will be content!"

"Attend to your mistress, Mrs. Nuttall," I answered, "and don't speak at random. You don't know what has occasioned this illness, and you would do well to keep your surmises to yourself till you do know."

Mrs. Nuttall gave me another cordial glance; and then beginning to apply her remedies, she directed her nephew to sup-

port Mrs. Winifred's head, adding, in a sort of apologetical way, that as he was stronger than Miss Lucy he could do it to better advantage.

In the mean time, I stood attentively considering what was passing. I had many thoughts: they were affecting ones; but I will not commit them to paper, lest I should have reason to reproach myself with want of penetration, as in the case of the curate.

Mrs. Winifred at length opened her eyes, and fetched a deep sigh. David was holding her; Mrs. Nuttall stood at her feet; and Lucy was seated before her.

"Who is here?" she said, and looked round her. "Is it you, David?" and she sighed deeply. "And Lucy too? Ah, Lucy dear, why have I loved you so much? Why have you made a part in every dream of happiness that I have entertained for many years past? You ought not to be unkind. I can bear it from all of them, but not from you." And she was relieved by a burst of tears.

David still supported her, though she was now sitting up.

"Miss Lucy," observed the young man, roughly, though I thought honestly, "you ought not to vex her; any how she has been kind to you."

My Lucy gave him a look which seemed to say, "Taffy, my old friend, you for once have spoken in a way to please me." And then, falling on her knees before Mrs. Winifred, "Dear aunt," she said, "love your niece; forgive and pardon her: it was never her intention to offend you, or to give you pain."

"Offend!" repeated Mrs. Winifred; "no, that is not the word: you have not offended, you have grieved and wounded me. You have shewn a spirit, Lucy, which from you, at least, I did not expect. Was it such a sin in me, such an absurdity, to take a fancy to a fatherless child, that all the world should rise against me, and combine to persecute that orphan? But let them do their worst," she added, becoming inflamed again; "they shall not prevail: I defy them all; I despise them all; all but you, Lucy. I can bear it from all, but not from you."

While Mrs. Winifred was speaking, there was a wildness in her eye, and a confusion in her manner, which at first led me to fear for her head; but it afterwards brought the conviction, that Mrs. Nuttall, in giving her something to drink as she was recovering from her fainting-fit, had administered a potion of more than common strength.

"If," proceeded the old lady, "being myself a single woman, I have chosen to patronize a poor orphan child, and if I have loved that child in infancy, and still continue to love him now that he is grown up, why should I have the whole world against me for this act of kindness? and why should you, Lucy, you who are in general so kind, so compassionate, so charitable—why should you unite with this cruel world to throw contempt on the object of my regard?"

"Contempt, aunt Winifred!" said Lucy. "I do not despise Mr. Nuttall: why should I? I appeal to himself to answer for me. David," she added, looking up to him, "have I ever treated you with contempt?"

"Have you ever shewn me any thing but contempt, Miss?" was his reply.

"I may have been reserved," she answered; "but I have never despised you. Only act like a gentleman, Mr. Nuttall, and no one will deny you the respect and consequence which my aunt wishes to give you: but while you make Mr. Tolly and Black Tom your intimates, do not expect that either ladies or gentlemen will regard you."

"Well, Miss," replied Taffy, "if you wish it, I will cease to keep company with those people."

"I wish it no further than for your own sake, David," said Lucy. "I have always told you that I wish you well."

"And you would have me understand by that, I suppose," he answered, "that you are willing to bestow on me your good wishes which are of a sort I don't value, but nothing else, not even those common civilities due to every one."

"I have never been rude to you, David," said the young lady. And then, turning to her aunt, "Dear aunt Winifred," she said,

"pardon and love me as formerly. Give me your hand, and say you forgive me. I will not rise till you have said so."

"No, Lucy, no," answered Mrs. Winifred; "I can only forgive you on one condition: give your hand to David, and tell him that you are willing henceforward to accommodate yourself to my wishes with respect to your treatment of him: and then, my Lucy, I will take you to my heart as the dearest object of my affections; and you may command all I have in the world."

I was astonished; and Mrs. Nuttall seemed displeased at this speech, which perhaps exceeded some boundary of discretion set down by the wary duenna; whom my reader will, no doubt, have already conceived to be the hidden mover of all the wheels in this complicated business. But what said Lucy to this extraordinary speech of Mrs. Winifred?

She looked in her face, was silent a moment, and then replied, "Aunt Winifred, I want nothing from you but your affection. Pray understand me: I am not your heir, and I will not have your possessions. May

you keep them long yourself; and when you can enjoy them no longer, may they go where justice points the way, and that will never be to me. It is not with any vile, earthly view, that here, on my knees, I solicit your forgiveness. I ask nothing from you but your affection; and for this I humbly supplicate."

"Will you then forgive David every past offence?" said Mrs. Winifred.

"He has not offended me," replied Lucy.

"It is enough then," said the old lady, rising. And, at the same time, she offered to raise Lucy, taking her hand in one of hers, and David's hand in the other, and, by a motion as rapid as unexpected, bringing the hands of the two young people together, and placing that of the young lady within that of David Nuttall. Then, pressing her lips on Lucy's, she pronounced a blessing on her adopted children, and quitted the arbour.

She went out, leaning on David's arm, and followed by Mrs. Nuttall: so that the only persons who remained in the arbour were Miss Lovel and myself. A

minute or more passed, before either of us uttered a word; during which time, our eyes followed the party which was retreating. At length, Lucy turned to me, and said, "Mr. Airley, are you not astonished—stupified—amazed? Does she suppose, or can she desire it? Would she actually have me marry her housekeeper's nephew?"

"It is her object, decidedly," I answered.

"Is she mad, Mr. Airley?" was Lucy's next question.

"No," I replied; "she is not mad: she undoubtedly knows what she is about. She is not acting without a motive, and a very powerful one too."

"And what is that motive?" asked Lucy.

"Your question," I replied, "is one that has often, very often, exercised my mind; but I have never yet discovered a satisfactory solution of it. Your aunt either is, or imagines herself to be, so entirely under the power of Mrs. Nuttall, that she is compelled to lend herself to the ambitious views of this hateful woman. See you not how she trembles under her eye? how she

dreads her displeasure? It is my opinion, that Mrs. Nuttall is in possession of some very important secret of Mrs. Winifred's."

"I have often thought so," replied Miss Lovel; "but what can that secret be?"

"Did Mrs. Nuttall live with your aunt before your grandfather's death?" I enquired.

"She did, Sir," replied Lucy.

"Was not Mrs. Winifred strongly attached to your father?" I asked.

"She is reported to have been very much so," returned Lucy. "But what, Sir, is the tendency of this enquiry? Can Mrs. Winifred's attachment to my father have any connexion with this mystery?"

"Really," I replied, "I know not what has or what has not a connexion with it: but I confess that my curiosity is strongly excited, and I wish to know more of the younger days of Mrs. Winifred. Tell me, Lucy, was it in your grandfather's power to make any other division of the lands of Roxobel, than that which was actually understood to have been made at his death?"

"Not that I know of, Sir," replied Lucy. "The estates came from my grandmother. They unfortunately are not entailed."

"Mrs. Winifred is the only woman of business in the family," I remarked. "Is it possible that she should have used any artifice to enlarge her own share of the property and to diminish that of her sisters? and can Mrs. Nuttall be in possession of such a secret?"

"Really," replied Lucy, "I cannot answer. I am perplexed and confounded: I can come to no decision on the subject."

"Well, my Lucy," I added, "one thing is plain and obvious; and that is, that we must take care of you. You must be very open with me, and tell me all that passes. For the present, we will say no more of what has happened to-day in the arbour. We both are now agitated; and I do not feel that we can judge coolly with respect to what is best to be done. We will take a walk to the parsonage, and finish our day there; and to-morrow perhaps we shall be more calm."

So saying, we left the gardens of the Hall,

and soon arrived at the parsonage, where Lucy speedily recovered her composure in the society of her Sophia. By my advice, however, she did not mention the arbour scene to her fair companion, lest it should agitate her gentle spirit, which is already suffering under a load of troubles.

This afternoon, we walked in the park: and the little white dog which Sophia had nursed till it was quite well, strayed from us, and we lost it near the Torville woods; which led us to suppose that Torville was its original habitation.

CHAPTER XVII.

RURAL FELICITY.

It is decreed that my memorandums shall resemble the figures in a magic lantern, wherein Punch and his wife, Tom Fool and harlequin, precede and succeed tragedy queens, emplumed heroes, and knights in armour.

I am sensible that the little man of Roxobel has long been voted, by the good people in this place, to be a sort of tame animal, which may be admitted without fear or distrust into every society; a creature which is never supposed to have the power of repeating any thing: and I am not quite certain, whether he is believed, at all times, to possess the faculty of observation, if I may judge from the little constraint which his presence seems to impose upon those about him.

On the night which succeeded the arbour scene, Lucy slept at the parsonage; having signified to her aunts, that she meant to spend the following day in company with Sophia;—and this, being no uncommon circumstance, would excite no surprise, at the same time that it would afford her opportunity for reflection. Knowing, therefore, that she was safe, I took occasion to ride over to the Rock Hamlet, to look at the family there, which I have taken under my particular charge.

As soon as I arrived at the foot of the Rock, I took the bit from the mouth of my quiet pony, and left him to graze at his ease, as I have often done before.

As I was climbing the steep ascent, I met young Taylor descending in haste. "Whither away, my friend?" I asked; "and what brought you here?"

The young man reddened, but was not ready with an answer.

"You have been to see Ellen?" I added.

"I have been at Mrs. Grosvenor's, Sir," he replied, "to carry something to her from my mother."

"And you find some errand to do this way very often, young man, I suspect?"

He made no answer, but looked confused.

"Do your parents know that you come here so often?" was my next enquiry.

"No, Sir," he replied, "but I mean to tell them very soon. I have made up my mind to tell them, only I can't get Ellen to say whether I may or not; for you know, Sir, it would be no use for me to tell them, if, after all, Ellen does not favour me: and she is is so saucy, Sir!—yes, Sir, so saucy and so skittish! She always runs away whenever I come to the Rock. Why, Sir, this very day she was gathering cowslips in the meadow, when I came down the bank; and she no sooner looked up, and saw me across the brook, than she dropped all the cowslips out of her apron, and away she ran, and one must have had the foot of a deer to have caught her: and that is the way with her always."

"And a very good way too," I remarked: "I like it of all things."

The young man looked half angry at me: but on seeing me smile, he smiled too; and

then I said, "Now tell me, Robert, if you do not think that this swiftness of foot in this gazelle of the Rock, is not one of her most valuable qualities?"

"Gazelle, Sir!" repeated Robert: "what is a gazelle, Sir?"

"A beautiful deer, with gloriously soft and bright eyes," I answered. "But, to be plain with you, I do not think that you need be afraid to open your mind to your parents respecting Ellen. She does very well in avoiding you, till you come forward in an honourable way. And remember this, that though she has a bad stepfather, yet by the mother's side she comes of a good family, and has received a good education; and, besides all this, she is under my protection, and will not enter into any family without a suitable portion."

The eyes of the young man brightened as I spoke, and he gave me such a look of respect and affection as seemed to impart the warmth of a sunbeam to my heart; and then, bowing low, he was passing on, when I asked him if he were going to the village of Roxobel, or towards home.

He answered, "To the village."

"Well," I said, "then mount my pony, and ride him to Mr. Strickland's, and I will walk home through the park: and understand, my good Robert, that it is not every youth whom I would trust with my horse."

"He shall be none the worse for my treatment of him," replied the affectionate youth. And he went bounding down the Rock, while I made my way to the higher points of it.

I spent an hour or more at Mrs. Grosvenor's, examining Ellen in her books, her writing, and her ciphering: but I did not say any thing to her respecting Robert Taylor.

I thought that Mrs. Grosvenor looked very ill; and I was told by some of the cottagers on the Rock, that, since the death of her mother, her husband has treated her worse than he ever did before.

After finishing my business at the Rock, I walked quietly towards home through the park. I shall not say much of my meditations by the way, though it will not be questioned that they had a reference to

the transactions in the arbour on the previous day. I was thinking, that in the present gloomy and complicated state of our affairs, nothing but true religion, and that uprightness of conduct which is its natural result, could possibly be of service to us; and that, without the aid of this divine auxiliary, we should utterly fail in the endeavour to extricate ourselves from the labyrinth of our perplexities. Then, passing to more important considerations, I was led to reflect on the lamentable disorder, confusion, and despair, into which Satan has plunged the human race in leading them to sin; a state of things which must be utterly abhorred by the Almighty, inasmuch as it is directly at variance with his own harmonious operations. This subject seems to have been well understood by many of the ancient philosophers, who, in contemplating on the one hand the perfections of the Deity, and, on the other, the depravity of mankind, looked forward to futurity with such apprehensions of the divine justice, as rendered annihilation itself a desirable object

in comparison with the impending judgments of offended Omnipotence. Having thus considered for a while the deplorable condition into which man has been reduced by sin, I adverted, with delightful satisfaction, to the great and merciful work of redemption, which has been accomplished for us by the glorious Three in One. By this work, those attributes of the Divinity which had seemed to be in a state of everlasting variance have been reconciled and united; and, by this divine arrangement, order has been brought out of confusion, beauty has been made to take place of deformity, and Satan himself has been compelled, as it were, to administer to the praise and glory of the sacred Being whom he would defame and dishonour.

"And here," I thought, "is a lesson for us, an admonition from on high. Let us endeavour to give to every Christian virtue its perfect exercise, and then, amidst our complicated trials, we may rest in the assurance that peace and order will be the result of our comparatively pure and upright conduct."

Thus meditating, I walked slowly forward, and heard the Hall clock strike two, as I crossed that dingle of the park which is exactly opposite the yew-tree seat. In the bottom of the dingle I stood for a little time, to observe the waterfall as it dashed and foamed beneath the shade of the thick brushwood and luxuriant plants of the marsh which bathed their roots in the stream. There my ear was regaled with the song of many birds, among which the moaning of the ring-dove was remarkable.

At length, I began to ascend towards the yew-tree seat, but was surprised, as I advanced, to hear many human voices mingling themselves with the rural sounds I have mentioned; and began to hope that I might see Lucy and Sophia before me when I emerged from the thicket. With this view, I hastened forward: but, conceive my astonishment, when, stepping out from the shade, the yew-tree seat directly before me seemed like a beehive in swarming time. I believe that I have used the same simile before; but no matter: it suits

the present case so exactly that I cannot refrain from a repetition. The old circular thatched seat looked so like a straw hive, and the company within and at its mouth were so busy, so noisy, and at the same time so apparently without an object, that they really seemed as much in want of some one to settle them with keys and a frying-pan as ever did a company of bees in any old woman's garden in the three kingdoms. But to make out the persons of whom this goodly company was composed, was past my power: and, indeed, how should I?—for it was chiefly compounded of persons from Beckington, who were come to spend a day in the woods of Roxobel. "Well, and what harm?" as the doctor would have said, in his happier days. Poor Doctor Beauchamp!

But I wished that I had been aware of the party, before I stood forth so prominent a figure, as prominent as such a little figure could be, directly in their view, with no hopes of accomplishing a retreat, without a dereliction of good manners. This was really the case; for, although the

greater part of the company were strangers, the kings and the queens of the festival were all well known to me. Among these, the person who first recognized me was Mr. Claypole, who advanced to meet me with a brisk step. In the back-ground, I perceived his lady, the *ci-devant* Miss Betty, now become a stout comely dame. She had with her a rough spoiled boy of about four years of age, her only child, the family darling, and the family torment. By the side of this lady, were her sisters the two Misses Finchley, Mr. Barnaby Semple, Mr. Jeffry Griffith, and Miss Esther Stephens.

Mr. Claypole (who has always taken some merit to himself, from the circumstance of his having been my first acquaintance in or near Roxobel) advanced, as I before said, with all the glee of the occasion; and, with that sort of familiarity which townspeople often assume when they have set apart a day for the enjoyment of rural felicity, he addressed me as if I had come with the express determination of joining the party, thanking me with much warmth for indulg-

ing the company with my presence. He then led me towards the hut, and introduced me to his numerous friends, naming each stranger lady and gentleman with great vivacity, and laying a particular stress, as I observed, on the names of Mapleton, Prattleton, and Dickison. These appellations, I afterwards found, belonged to three young ladies who were considered as having done Mr. Claypole some credit by condescending to visit Roxobel in his society.

These ladies were all attired in riding-habits, with clusters of feathers in their hats; but the air and exercise having disconcerted their curls, and deranged their toupees, I did not view them to such advantage as they perhaps might have wished. Added to these unfavourable circumstances, they all seemed to have formed the same notion as Mr. Claypole with regard to the gaiety of the occasion; appearing to believe that it was expected of them to seem overwhelmed with a sense of happiness far exceeding that of every day's experience. In consequence of this feeling,

they talked loudly, and laughed more loudly; amusing us with a sort of shrieking exclamation whenever any thing new or extraordinary presented itself.

Added to these three ladies, all of whom had been schoolfellows of Miss Esther Stephens, was the aunt of one of them, an older lady, named Miss Pilkington, of whom I shall have more to say hereafter.

I had a sort of struggle with the little man of Roxobel, while being introduced to the company; for the little man was getting rather sulky, not having quite made up his mind whether he should make himself agreeable or otherwise. However, upon Miss Finchley coming forward, with a gracious smile and a deep courtesy, inviting the same little gentleman to walk into the alcove and partake of a cold "collection" which was waiting therein, he thought better of it, smiled, bowed, remembered his French manners, and was all himself again.

Having gone through a due course of bows, shaking of hands, and compliments to the ladies;—and having played at bandy for a few seconds with the words "delightful

—charming—Roxobel—woods—waterfalls —fine weather—prospects—blossoms—seasons—gales," and so on;—I was left a little to myself, and the company which had gathered round me (for, as I afterwards heard, there were several persons there who had long desired in vain to see me) began to scatter themselves in duos and trios over the lawn. Having thus an opportunity for observation, I discovered, for the first time, that a large round table had been placed within the alcove, on which a cloth was laid, and which was overspread with a variety of cold meats, jugs, bottles, and glasses: a very agreeable sight, indeed, to a man who had been in the open air for the last four hours. This was Miss Finchley's cold "collection;" and, I thought, that it was as well selected a "collection" as any that I had ever seen.

Mr. Jeffry Griffith, seeing my eye directed towards the good things within the hut, gave me a knowing wink, (for he had not, as I immediately perceived, thought it necessary on this occasion to assume his best suit of manners,) and remarked familiarly that

Mr. Airley might be trusted to find out where the attraction lay. "Our rural felicity is not all romance you see, Sir," he added. "Our happiness is built on a solid foundation, thanks to Miss Finchley's hospitable foresight. But, Mr. Claypole," he continued, "you have not been so provident as your lady's sister. I don't see the lemons and sugar. I shall be disappointed if we have no punch."

"Punch!" exclaimed Mr. Claypole. "And pray how are we to boil the water, Mr. Jeffry?"

"Well, well, after all, it is but cold comfort you give us, Mr. Claypole," added the steward, facetiously. "But what are we waiting for? I shall eat my fingers, if I must not attack the beef before much more time has elapsed."

"Waiting!" repeated Miss Esther. "We are waiting for Mr. David. I was in hopes it was him, just now, when I saw Mr. Airley come out of the wood."

"Mr. Airley," said the steward, "why don't you bow your thanks to the young lady for her compliment?"

"Dear me!" cried Esther; "I did not think what I was saying!"

Miss Finchley, having looked at her watch, said, "We must not wait long for Mr. Nuttall, for we have a great deal to do this evening. We have to walk up to the Pools, and then back to the Hall;—for the ladies would not miss seeing the Hall;—and it will be quite dusk before all this can be done: so, Mr. Claypole, I believe we had better begin to partake of the 'collection;'" for she could not forget this amusing blunder.

"Sure," said Miss Esther, "you would not begin without Mr. David?"

Miss Finchley looked perplexed: but a speedy termination was put to her trouble, by an exclamation from Mr. Griffith, who exclaimed, "Away with you to your seats, for the hero is at hand. There he comes, mounted on the Arab, and, as I am alive, the groom is riding behind him. That's a new move, Mr. Airley: what will things come to by and by?"

These last words were spoken aside to me: after which, the steward, raising his

voice, performed the part of the fifer whose business it is to pipe his comrades to dinner. The happy party returned to the hut in pairs, each lady being attended by a gentleman as far as the gentlemen would go, (for, in parties of this kind, there are generally to be found more ladies than gentlemen, the gentlemen being supposed to be better engaged elsewhere.)

In a few minutes, only Mr. Griffiths, Miss Esther, Miss Finchley, Mrs. Claypole, Miss Pilkington, and myself, were left without. David, in the mean time, was approaching on horseback; but had stopped an instant to speak to some one who had crossed his path.

"Come, come," cried the steward, "take your partner, Mr. Airley, and walk in;" and at the same time he offered his hand to Miss Esther.

The young lady immediately snatched her hand away, and put it behind her.

"How now, Miss?" exclaimed the steward, laughing.

"I am sure I won't give my hand to you neither," said Miss Esther.

"And why not?" asked the steward.

"Because you always make fun of me," was her elegant reply.

"Cruel creature!" exclaimed Mr. Griffith. "Well then I must go in alone, and console myself with the cold beef, unless Mrs. Claypole will honour me with her fair hand." And accordingly he handed that lady into the hut, while I, offering my services to Miss Finchley, was to my sorrow turned over to Miss Pilkington, whom I had determined to avoid for two reasons: first, because she is as unreasonably tall as I am short, and secondly, because I had already discerned in the lady strong symptoms of that sort of sensibility and refinement of taste which we sometimes suppose to result from an indiscriminate study of the works of the circulating library. My fate for the next hour was however fixed: and I was half angry, as I handed the lady to her seat, to observe a smirk upon the face of many of the beaux of the company, occasioned by the disproportion of our heights. I was, however, resolved to keep the little man in order; for, little and in-

significant as he is, I often find it to be a difficult matter to make him behave himself.

In the mean time, the trampling of Mr. David's horses was more distinctly heard; while Miss Esther and Miss Finchley still stood without the hut: and the next moment the youth appeared before us in a smart riding-dress, mounted on the finest horse in Mrs. Helmsley's stud, and followed by the groom.

"I am so glad you are come, Mr. David!" exclaimed Miss Esther. And Miss Finchley apologized for her company having sat down to the "collection" before his arrival.

"We have waited half an hour for you, Mr. David," said Esther.

"I am sorry for it," replied Taffy, with unmoved gravity; "for I am concerned to say, Miss Finchley, that I am now only come to make my excuses. Mrs. Helmsley cannot spare me this evening. I am engaged to accompany her in her airing. I must, therefore, wish you a good morning, Miss Finchley." And with that he turned his horse's head, and was out of hearing in a few seconds.

"Did you ever see any thing like that?" exclaimed Esther. "Mr. David is so monstrous high lately, and gives himself such airs!"

"Hush, hush," said Miss Finchley.

"And only a footman's son, neither!" cried Miss Esther. "And what was his mother but a dairy-maid? and his aunt, what is she?"

"Hush, hush, hush," repeated our hostess.

"Miss Finchley," shouted the steward from his seat, "do, pray, come to your place. You know we can't begin without you; so come in." Upon this, the lady entered, courtesying and apologizing, and at the same time requesting Esther to follow her.

"Come, Miss Esther," said the steward.

"Come, Esther," exclaimed Miss Mapleton.

"Pray come, Esther," cried Miss Prattleton.

"Pray do come, Esther," repeated Miss Dickison. "You used to have a good appetite at school: what is come to you now?"

"I am not hungry," replied Esther. "I am not used to eat between meals."

"Well but, Miss, you will not have any more dinner to-day," remarked Mr. Claypole.

"Let her alone," whispered the steward. "Young Nuttall has ridden away with her appetite."

"Don't whisper quite so loud, Mr. Griffith," said one of the holiday gentlemen from Beckington.

On this, the three young ladies, namely, the Misses Mapleton, Prattleton, and Dickison, burst into a loud laugh: and the little man of Roxobel again felt himself to be getting out of humour; for he is easily discomposed, when he observes any thing like ill breeding.

The attention of the company, however, was soon diverted to another subject, by Master Claypole, who burst into a tremendous roar, because his mother had taken the liberty of expostulating with him respecting the leg of a fowl, which he was endeavouring to insert into his mouth at once: for no one can ascertain the capacity of the mouth of a spoiled child. Neither

could the brat be appeased, notwithstanding all the soothings which were administered by the wise women in the hut, until the father, pulling a most terrible face, threatened to souse him in the cascade; on which little master thought proper to be silent.

"Twenty years hence, Mr. Claypole," I whispered to my old friend, "if I live long enough, I shall have to congratulate you on the happy effects of spoiling your son. Take a friend's advice: don't encourage that little immortal creature in the indulgence of bad passions: 'Correct thy child while there is hope.'"

Mr. Claypole is a well meaning man, and he received my reproof in a very pleasing and handsome manner.

When the roars of the boy had ceased, the conversation became less general; and, as every one spoke to his immediate neighbour, I was compelled to listen to Miss Pilkington. Our discourse was particularly interesting; and I shall therefore make a point of recording it with fidelity, for the good of posterity.

Miss Pilkington spoke first, and her address was to the following effect. "I consider it a very superior gratification, Mr. Airley," said the lady, with a gracious smile, "to have fallen into your society this day. I have heard much of your benevolence, your compassion, and your enlarged charity to the afflicted: and I have not unfrequently shed the tear of sympathy when made acquainted with the sweet effects of your liberality."

I bowed, and said—"Madam!"

The lady then proceeded. "I had anticipated the satisfaction of seeing you, on this my first visit to this enchanting place; and I have been gratified in this particular as in every other: for indeed, Sir, much as I have heard of the exquisite beauties of this charming spot, the voice of fame has fallen far below the truth. For what, my good Sir, what can exceed the beautiful verdure of these lawns? the glistening brightness of these waterfalls? the majesty of these woods? the elegance of those deer? and the sweet timidity of the little fawns which skip and play so prettily around their mo-

thers? And then, Sir;"—and she paused awhile: after which she proceeded;—"the society, Sir, the society, is so superior at Roxobel, if I may judge by the specimens I have seen."—And she bowed, and I bowed.

"The Misses Finchley are so amiable," continued the lady; "and Mr. Semple so genteel; Mr. Griffith so witty; and Mr. Airley," and she coughed, "Mr. Airley so polite, so accomplished!"

I bowed.

"You sing, Sir, and play too, I am told? and are poetical too, I hear?" resumed the lady.

"Poetical, Madam!" I repeated, in a kind of horror. "By no means, Madam. I never could put two stanzas together in my life."

"You are modest, you won't own it, Mr. Airley," returned the lady, smiling, and looking unconvinced. "But have we not all heard of the poet of Roxobel? and have we not seen some of your pretty pieces?"

"Mine, Ma'am?" I said.

"Yes, Sir, yours," insisted the lady, with

an engaging smile. "And one especially, on rural felicity, which I have in my book of manuscript pieces. It begins—'Happy the swain!'"

"It is not mine, Madam," I said: "I will appeal to the company. Mr. Pen Map, our schoolmaster, is the author of that beautiful sonnet." And, in my distress, I applied to Mr. Griffith, asking him if he ever knew me guilty of writing a line of poetry.

"Mr. Airley," rejoined the steward, "can you have the face to affirm you don't write poetry? Ladies, have you never heard of the famous poet of Roxobel? You have now the opportunity of beholding him;—of seeing our *Apollo*, our *Virgil*, our *Milton*, our *Homer*. And that fine piece on rural felicity alluded to is his prime work. Don't be modest, Mr. Airley: don't be ashamed of the laurels which are your due."

It was in vain for me to plead innocence. I was completely overpowered by the steward and Mr. Barnaby Semple, who both united in the joke: and I should hardly have known how to carry on the conversation with my sentimental companions,

had I not been relieved by a note from Sophia. It was brought by a little boy, who had been running after me some hours from the village to the Rock, and from the Rock to the hut. The note was sent to engage me to tea at the parsonage, and served as a very good excuse for taking leave of the company; from whom I parted with many thanks for their hospitable reception, and with a very low and polite bow to each lady separately.

This evening was finished with my beloved friends at the parsonage, with whom I always feel myself in congenial society.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VARIOUS MANŒUVRES AT THE HALL.

I WAS anxious to observe how things would go on at the Hall, after the arbour scene; and, for this purpose, I questioned Miss Lucy, on the third day after that which had been consecrated to rural felicity, respecting the state of affairs in the interior.

She replied, that she did not see Mrs. Winifred till the hour of dinner on the preceding day; and that then, her aunts being all assembled, she perceived no difference in their behaviour to each other from that which was usual. She also added, that it was very common with her aunts to have little quarrels: "during which," said she, "their expressions are sometimes rather sharp; but, having exhausted their

quivers, and taken a turn or two in their own apartments, they generally meet again as if nothing unpleasant had happened."

I asked Lucy if Mrs. Judy had made any remark, during their breakfastings, upon the scene of the past day.

"Yes," replied Miss Lucy; "my aunt said that her sister Winifred was quite infatuated with the Nuttalls, and she cautioned me against having any thing to say to David; a caution for which I thanked her, though I did not need it.

"But I have not told you all yet, Mr. Airley," proceeded Lucy. "I was going to inform you, that, after dinner yesterday, as I went out of the dining-room, my aunt Winifred said that she wished to speak to me, in the course of the afternoon, in her own apartment. I accordingly waited upon her, and found her sitting in her dressing-room, with a flower from the hothouse placed in a glass upon the table by her side.

"'Lucy,' said Mrs. Winifred, 'I am very anxious to have a drawing of this curious specimen; and for this purpose I

desired you to come to me. Do you think you could accomplish it?'

"I plainly perceived that this was merely an excuse to get me alone; but, being desired to sit down, we talked awhile of the flower, and of the style in which it was to be drawn: and then Mrs. Winifred, ringing her bell, ordered Mrs. Nuttall to send up the tea-things, saying that she would drink tea in her own room, and that I should make it for her.

"Mrs. Nuttall obeyed. And I was just preparing the tea, when I heard a gentle rap at the door: and Mrs. Winifred bidding the person who knocked to enter, David Nuttall appeared, and, to my amazement, was invited by my aunt to take a seat. I had risen on hearing the knock, and stood till he had taken his seat; being, as you may suppose, Mr. Airley, very angry, and very much astonished.

"'Sit down, Lucy,' said Mrs. Winifred.

"I sat down, but said nothing: and Taffy, not the least abashed by my gravity, began to talk with as much ease and freedom as he is accustomed to use in

the housekeeper's room; among other things, giving Mrs. Winifred an account of the party which he had seen on the previous day in the yew-tree seat.

"While thus conversing, David used several expressions indicative of low breeding; for which my aunt reproved him, giving him such advice as would perhaps have been serviceable had she bestowed it at an earlier period of his life, and had she taken care that it should be accompanied by a corresponding education.

"While this discourse was proceeding, I kept quite silent, determining to leave the room as soon as I had finished making tea. But Mrs. Winifred, as if foreseeing my intention, lingered over every dish, sometimes looking at me, and sometimes conversing with Taffy.

"At length, the young man, addressing himself to me, enquired why I was not one of the party in the park; adding, that, if I had been there, he should not have turned his back upon the company as he did.

"'I was not invited, Sir,' I answered.

"'That was a great oversight of the Misses Finchley,' he rejoined.

"'Not at all, Sir,' I replied. 'The Misses Finchley understand, that, while society is in its present state, subordination must be attended to, and that the different ranks must not mix indiscriminately.'

"'That's a cut at me, Miss Lovel,' he replied, reddening violently. 'But I can't understand your distinctions. Were not you as familiar with old Mrs. Goodwill, who lived in one of the poorest cottages in Roxobel, as ever you were with Mrs. Beauchamp?'

"'The cottage is nothing,' I replied; 'but education and good manners are a great deal.'

"'Then you would have us to understand, that you think the Misses Finchley have neither the one nor the other,' he rejoined.

"'I never either said or thought so, Mr. Nuttall,' I answered.

"'Then what do you mean, Miss Lovel?' he asked.

"I made no reply.

"'What does she mean, Mrs. Winifred?' enquired the young man.

"'Why, she means, what I have often told you, David,' said Mrs. Winifred; 'that if you wish to be received among ladies and gentlemen, you must cultivate good manners.'

"'And I must get a new name, too,' said David. 'I know Miss Lovel does not like the name of Nuttall: do you, Miss?'

"'The name is well enough, David,' I replied: 'there are many worse. Do credit to your name, and no one will object to you on that account.'

"Both Mrs. Winifred and Mr. Nuttall seemed more gratified with this speech than I had intended them to be: and I therefore resolved to make such an addition to it as I imagined would correct the erroneous impression. 'I have always been in the habit, Mr. Nuttall,' I said, 'of speaking plainly. I think I understand, from what has lately passed, that my aunt wishes, in some degree, to adopt you, and to raise you above that rank in which you have been hitherto educated. I am only sorry that this was not thought of sooner; though it is not now too late to learn: and

if you will henceforward endeavour to improve yourself, associating no longer with vulgar and profligate companions, I believe that there is not an individual in my aunt's family, and I certainly can speak for myself, who will not have pleasure in serving you, and in treating you with respect. And I am the less reserved, in saying so much, because my own plans in life are determined, and, as far as I am concerned, they are irrevocably fixed.'

"David and Mrs. Winifred gazed on me, while I was speaking, in mute amazement. And after I had ceased to speak, Mrs. Winifred was silent for a moment, and then said, 'I am certain that David will have great pleasure in following any advice that you will be so kind as to give him, niece.'

"'I almost doubt it, Ma'am,' I answered.

"'And why?' asked Mrs. Winifred.

"'Because,' I replied, 'he has never, hitherto, paid the least attention to any hint that I have given him.'

"'That was because you never gave any

of your advice in kindness. I know you never liked me, and don't now,' answered David.

"'If you mean to say that I like other people better than I like you, Mr. Nuttall, you are perfectly right,' I answered. 'But still I have a great regard for you as being a person whom I have known from childhood: and I wish you every happiness.'

"'You don't, Miss Lovel,' retorted Taffy. 'You would not make me happy if you could.'

"'I would do all that is reasonable for you, Mr. David,' I answered; 'and I am not in the least jealous of Mrs. Winifred's favour towards you. I want nothing from Mrs. Winifred myself: I have told her so a thousand times. Don't suppose, then, that you have an enemy in me.'

"'But you know your brother hates me,' continued Taffy.

"'Indeed, I don't know it,' I answered. 'If he were to confess to me that he entertained such a feeling towards you, I should certainly blame him.'

"'And Mr. Beauchamp too,' added Taffy, 'he also hates me.'

"'Well, he is out of your way now,' I answered.

"'He is not!' returned Taffy, vehemently; 'he is not out of my way!'—and he reddened with indignation.

"I saw Mrs. Winifred give the young man a look: it was a look which I did not like; and she perceived that I was displeased. Indeed, I could not dissemble my angry feelings: so I arose, and, wishing Mrs. Winifred a good evening, walked out of the room, leaving her and Taffy to make what comments they pleased on my sudden departure.

"And now, Mr. Airley," added the young lady, "what do you think of this strange conversation?"

"What can I think?" I answered. "Surely the mystery of this connexion between Mrs. Winifred and the Nuttalls will develope itself by and by: and, in the mean time, we must be on our guard, and watch all their motions."

Since the foregoing conversation, I have

noticed little which appears worthy of particular mention. The poor doctor still continues very weak. Our dear Sophia is calm and placid; but there is a shade of sorrow shed over her lovely features. Mrs. Judy declines rapidly; but Lucy is by no means aware of her aunt's danger.

This dear young lady, however, is doing that which, with the divine blessing, may advance the happiness of her venerable friend through all eternity. She has lately talked much of her interviews with Mrs. Judy, and seems entirely to have forgotten, for the time being, all her cares and perplexities respecting Master Taffy.

In conversing with me this morning, she said, "I have brought my aunt Judy to throw aside all her good works: and I have good reason to think that she has been led to place her dependence altogether where it ought to be, namely, upon the Rock of Ages. She does not boast to me now, Mr. Airley, of her exact observance of Nelson's Fasts and Festivals, or of her regular attendance at church, or of her gifts to the poor, or of her owing no

man any thing. No: she now, I trust, regards herself as a miserable sinner, who can be preserved from the effects of the divine displeasure by no other means than a personal participation in the efficacy of that atonement whereby we are made partakers of the merits, and companions of the glory, of our exalted Redeemer. And then, Sir, she is now so gentle and so kind, that she asks me whom she ought to remember in her will, with the meekness of a little child: and I have reminded her of several people. And I am almost certain that she has not forgotten Eugenius; for she has said, more than once, that, as far as she has the means of accomplishing it, the name of Lovel shall not be forgotten in the fields of Roxobel. I assure you, Mr. Airley, my good old aunt gets quite poetical and pathetic. She is like a lamb, Mr. Airley, and looks at me with such a dovelike expression! I could hardly have believed that a change of heart (for I am sure her heart is changed) could have imparted such beauty to her shrivelled and yellow features."

We are now looking forward to the arrival of Eugenius. He is soon to take his leave of Oxford; and Mrs. Winifred has invited him to the Hall. She has been rather pressing with this invitation; which leads me to suppose that she has some scheme in hand with respect to the future prospects of the young gentleman. This scheme has probably some reference to the subject of marriage;—for Miss Lucy informs me, that a Miss Fisher, (the sole heiress and representative of the Fishers, whose forefather, Sir Charles Fisher, married Mary, the eldest of the twelve sisters of Sir Craddock Helmsley,) has been invited to the Hall, and is expected to arrive in about three weeks. Lucy has never seen the lady; but she feels quite assured that she will not prove a dangerous rival to our lovely Sophia.

Amid all these manœuvres, I endeavour to continue tranquil, and to cast all my cares on a wise and tender Providence.

CHAPTER XIX.

MISS CAROLINE FISHER.

SEVERAL weeks have passed since my former chapter was written: and during that period, events have crowded on us.

Miss Caroline Fisher, or, I should rather call her, Miss Fisher, for she is an heiress, and the sole representative of an ancient and respectable family, is arrived. She reached Roxobel about three days before the time which was fixed for the return of Eugenius. I heard of her arrival from Mrs. Strickland, as she was bringing up my supper: for reports travel over Roxobel, as it were on the wings of the wind. And I must own, that I was not a little impatient to see the young lady; for, notwithstanding my confidence in the honour and attachment of Eugenius, I nevertheless

trembled for my Sophia. My impatience led me rather earlier than usual to the library at the Hall; and there at once my curiosity was satisfied, and my apprehensions for Sophia were removed.

On opening the library-door, I saw before me a tall female figure, sitting in my accustomed place, and looking over my drawings: for I am in the habit of leaving my drawings, and drawing-apparatus, arranged on my table; being assured, that the servant who cleans the library would on no account venture to derange a single item among the mass of sketches, pencils, colours, and brushes. The dress of this person, as I viewed her from behind, was a muslin wrapper, profusely decorated with trimmings, and tied, about the sleeves and round the waist, with pink ribands. On her head was a sort of mob-cap, the borders or brims of which, being of fine lace, were ruffled round her face. This cap was also adorned with large pink knots.

On the noise made by the servant in shutting the door after me, (for Richard always

attends me to the library-door,) the figure rose, and, in rising, shewed her stature to be considerably above the usual standard of her sex. At the same time, turning to look at me, she displayed a very marked countenance, an aquiline nose, rather a wide mouth, exceedingly white teeth, large grey eyes, strongly defined eyebrows, and cheeks of deep vermilion.

I was ready with my bow, and the lady also with her short and rapid sink:—I will not call it a courtesy. And then, the fair one, stepping forward and extending her hand, said, "Mr. Airley, I suppose? I am prepared to admire Mr. Airley; I have heard so much of Mr. Airley. And I shall be actually in despair, if he does not bestow on Caroline Fisher some little portion of that good will and kindness with which, I am told, his own good heart is so largely embued."

"*Sentimental!*" I thought, as I bowed and advanced to the table.

"Your drawings are beautiful, exquisite, Mr. Airley!" proceeded the lady. "And I hear that you are so kind as to in-

struct Miss Lovel and Miss Beauchamp. I must, absolutely, become your pupil. You have studied in Italy, Sir, I am convinced. You have dipped your pencil in the tints of Claude. I am absolutely devoted, Mr. Airley, to the study of the picturesque. I am dying, actually dying, to sketch some of those exquisite scenes which are spread before this window. Mr. Airley, you must accompany me in some of my exploring schemes. I mean to visit every hole and corner of this fine place. But think you not, Mr. Airley, that if some of those groves on the higher regions of the park were thinned, so that the light could be seen through the shafts of the trees, it would add great beauty to the scene? I do love the *chiaro obscuro* above all things. I have the Italian taste in landscape altogether, Mr. Airley. I am expiring to visit Italy."

Thus she ran on; while I was employed in making my observations, and had arrived at the conclusion, that the lady looked at least five years older than Eugenius, and that more art was manifested in the adornment of her person than was by any means

consistent with simplicity of character, or with good taste.

The entrance of Lucy, however, soon brought me relief from that excessive weariness which I always experience in conversing with an artificial character. Such characters, indeed, are so superficial, so flimsy, and so easily deciphered, that they seldom entertain us by affording any subject either of interest or speculation.

When Lucy entered, I perceived directly that something had discomposed her. She expressed some surprise at seeing me with her cousin, or, rather, her cousin with me. But she lost no time in explaining the cause of her uneasiness, by informing me that her aunt Judy was much worse, having, as she believed, had a sort of stroke during the night.

"Well, my dear," said Miss Fisher, "how can you be uneasy on that account? Mrs. Judy was never likely to recover; and why should you regret a speedy termination to her troubles?"

Lucy made no answer: but I remarked to Miss Fisher, that death must always

be terrible to flesh and blood, under any form.

"To be sure, Sir, it must be painful to every feeling heart to contemplate it," replied the young lady. And she then repeated several of those commonplace remarks with which people of little sensibility are generally provided, on occasion of any calamity which does not immediately afflict themselves.

It is excessively irksome to be obliged to listen to unfeeling observations on a subject painfully interesting to our own hearts. I was aware that Lucy felt thus in the present instance; for she speedily changed the subject of discourse, by asking me how soon we might expect Eugenius.

"In three days," was my reply.

"Is your brother fond of riding?" enquired Miss Fisher. "He must absolutely ride with me to explore the neighbourhood. Have you any horse on which you can trust me? I am excessively timid: but I cannot live without exercise on horseback. Yet, I don't like riding in company with a servant. It is by no means pleasant. It

is not well for a young lady to be seen abroad with only a groom: do you not agree with me, Mr. Airley?"

I bowed my acquiescence in the sentiment.

"Eugenius is not very fond of riding," rejoined Lucy.

"Well, we shall see," remarked the young lady. "But, Lucy, when will you introduce me to Miss Beauchamp? I am dying to see her. I am told that she is one of the fairest flowers in your parterre."

"The ill health of her father does not now permit her to receive company," replied Lucy.

"Does she never come to the Hall?" asked Miss Fisher.

"Not often," was Lucy's answer.

"Well, I must see her," remarked the young lady. "I am told she is very handsome, but, of course, not a fashionable young woman."

No one replied: on which Miss Fisher addressed herself to me, asking me to describe Sophia to her.

"It is impossible, Madam," I answered; "for the tints and touches which would depict a snowdrop, or a lily, can hardly be imitated by a mortal hand."

The lady looked disappointed: but, recovering herself with considerable address, she remarked, that every thing which she heard made her more and more desirous of beholding the lovely Miss Beauchamp.

"Yes," I thought, "and, if I am not much mistaken, the interview is thus anxiously desired, in order that you may know the better how to proceed, in endeavouring to obliterate the recollection of her from the heart of Eugenius." I felt that I could not give the young lady credit for coming to Roxobel without design.

I then recollected that Eugenius, in his letters from London, while attending on Theodore previously to his embarkation, had cursorily mentioned having seen Miss Fisher, and had alluded to a conversation which she had held with him respecting her aunts, her cousin Lucy, and the beautiful Miss Beauchamp, as she chose to designate Sophia. In this conversation she made it

appear, that she was thoroughly acquainted with the intimacy between the two families; and it was pretty clearly evident that she was aware of the attachment of Eugenius to Sophia. If, therefore, she now entertained hopes of obtaining the heir of Roxobel, her wishes were at once base and dishonourable. As this intention, however, had not yet been unveiled, it was but just not to entertain any decided suspicions respecting her till her motives for accepting of Mrs. Helmsley's invitation had become more clear and manifest. Nevertheless, I could not doubt that this young lady had been selected by Mrs. Winifred, as the intended wife of Eugenius.

After we had sat a while, conversing in the manner which I have described, seeing that Miss Fisher did not offer to evacuate my seat, I took my leave, resolving that while this lady remained at Roxobel, I would give my drawing-lessons in the study at the parsonage, to which I trusted that she would not find so easy an access.

I saw nothing more of Miss Fisher

for several days, and asked few questions respecting her; as Lucy seemed to be wholly occupied with her attentions to poor Mrs. Judy, who is decaying rapidly.

Our dear Eugenius arrived late last night. There was nobody to meet him, or to hail his return, as in the beginning of the last long vacation. His lovely sister had confined herself to the chamber of her aunt. Sophia's heart was with him, no doubt; but her word passed to Mrs. Winifred, and her high sense of female delicacy, restrained her from going to meet him. I was, however, in the library of the Hall, at the time of his expected arrival: and, as soon as he had paid his compliments to his aunts, he hastened to find me there. He rushed into my arms; and our congratulations were truly tender, as those of a father and a son who had been long separated, and were now again united under melancholy circumstances. Lucy soon joined us: and we spent several hours together in most interesting enquiries on all sides.

Eugenius asked after Sophia, and Dr. Beauchamp, and his lady. With what

tenderness did he speak of his Sophia! and how earnestly did I press him to hasten his ordination, in order that we might have a good excuse for disembarrassing ourselves of Mr. Aprice!

The arrival of Miss Fisher being mentioned to him, he observed, that he had seen her in London, and had then seen enough of her: and, hardly appearing to give the young lady a second thought, he proceeded to other subjects.

Lucy procured tea for us in the library; and Eugenius, on my taking leave, charged me with his duty to Dr. Beauchamp, begging permission to call upon him and Mrs. Beauchamp during the following day.

In the morning I carried this message to the parsonage: and, as the doctor expressed great anxiety to see his beloved pupil, I made a point of calling on Eugenius in the forenoon, and conducting him to the house of his tutor, where, I need hardly say, he was most cordially received; though, as I had foreseen, Sophia did not make her appearance.

When we were taking leave, Eugenius

asked after Sophia, and begged Mrs. Beauchamp to deliver to her his most grateful remembrances, his respects, his best regards:—for he seemed dissatisfied with every expression, and varied his message thus frequently, no doubt, in order to find a few words which might convey to the object of his affections the sensations of a faithful but almost despairing heart. I was truly sorry for him as he stepped out from the house to the lawn. He looked so pale, so sad, and drew two or three such deep sighs. But he did not speak: and I myself really did not possess the power of breaking the silence.

We passed on in this way for some time, till, turning the corner of the churchyard, in our way to the Hall, we were met by Mrs. Winifred, walking slowly, and leaning on the arm of Miss Fisher. The old lady bade me a good day, and Miss Fisher, addressing Eugenius, said, "Upon my word, Mr. Lovel, you are a most gallant gentleman! Did not you promise to walk with me this morning, and to shew me some of the beauties of Roxobel?—and here I have

been waiting for you these two hours, and, behold, you have walked out without me."

"I did not hear, Ma'am," was his answer.

"Hear what?" asked Miss Fisher.

"Hear you ask me," replied Eugenius.

"I ask you! Why, did you not yourself offer to walk with me?" enquired the lady.

"Did I, Ma'am?" rejoined Eugenius, who was evidently thinking of some other subject.

"Well then," interrupted Mrs. Winifred, "give your arm now, Mr. Lovel, to the young lady, and turn about with her."

Eugenius did as required: and Mrs. Winifred beckoned to a footman, who had followed the party, to advance and give her his arm, and attend her back to the Hall.

A look from Eugenius admonished me to accompany him; a look which I felt that I could not disregard: and I therefore walked round to the other side of the tall lady, and set her a talking, which I found to be no very difficult matter, by directing her

attention to the various beauties which surrounded us.

"And that," she exclaimed, "is the parsonage! What a lovely spot! I am half inclined to call. Would Mrs. Beauchamp take it as a liberty? You know, as a stranger, she ought to call first on me."

Eugenius made no reply: but I did not encourage the motion.

"You are very serious this morning, Mr. Lovel," observed the lady.

"I have found two of my oldest and best friends very ill," was his answer: "and it is not to be wondered at if I am low, Miss Fisher."

"It is to the credit of your heart, that you are so, Mr. Lovel," remarked the lady. "But come, Mr. Airley, cannot we say any thing to amuse and divert him? There is no use, my dear cousin, in giving way to melancholy thoughts. We can do no good by them to those we love. But what," added she, "is this charming little green gate, so sweetly shaded with mountain-ash? I must absolutely see what is beyond it."

"This gate opens into the parsonage-woods," I replied.

"Shall we see any of the family if we go in? shall we disturb any one?" she enquired.

"I think not," I answered: "but perhaps we had better take another direction."

"No, I must absolutely go in here," said the lady. And, disengaging her hand from the arm of Eugenius, she walked forward, and we followed her.

Pursuing the path a little way through embowering shrubs, we came out on the terrace, above that beautiful dingle to which I have so often before alluded; and here the lady burst forth into a variety of exclamations on the charms of the scenery. Eugenius was, no doubt, glad to visit this his favourite haunt of childhood under any circumstances, and therefore suffered Miss Fisher to take his arm again in silence; while I resumed my former position on the contrary side of the lady.

Coming to a part of the shadowy terrace where the road takes a sudden turn, I was somewhat startled at perceiving a part of

a white dress fluttering as if the person who wore it was moving quickly; and another turn brought us directly into the presence of Sophia.

We were within a few steps of the young lady, when first her figure presented itself to our view. Her face was pale, and the traces of tears were perceptible on her cheeks: in one hand she held a white handkerchief; and in the other was the miniature which Eugenius had given her, and which, in the first moment of her astonishment, she suffered to fall to the full extent of the chain to which it was attached, and which was suspended from her neck.

The paleness of this lovely young lady passed away at the sight of the intruders, as the shadows of the night vanish before the light of the morning; and a glow of surprise, and even of shame, at being thus found weeping over the picture of one towards whom she had wished to appear indifferent, suffused her whole face, and added new beauty to her charming features.

"Sophia!" exclaimed Eugenius, disengaging the hand of Miss Fisher from his arm, and springing forward.

What a look of sorrow, of regret, of deep, deep affection, was that which Sophia cast upon him as she brushed by us! And, without noticing Miss Fisher, she retreated with a step so quick that the next moment she was out of sight.

"Miss Beauchamp!" said Miss Fisher. "Why did she not stop, and allow me to be introduced to her?"

No one answered.

"She is not like what I had supposed," added the young lady, in evident confusion. "Why was she so much agitated at seeing us?"

"We ought not to have been here, Miss Fisher," I answered. "I have told you that the family are in distress."

"Yes, I know it," she replied. "But the doctor has been ill a long time, and Mr. Beauchamp has been absent some months. Afflictions which the mind has long contemplated do not affect us in the way we saw this young lady affected. And whose

picture might that be, think you, over which she has been evidently weeping, Mr. Airley? I caught a glimpse of it: it was that of a young man, I think."

No one made any answer to this impertinent speech: on which, Miss Fisher thought proper to reply to it herself.

"How foolish of me to ask!" she exclaimed. "The miniature was, no doubt, that of her brother. I don't wonder that Miss Beauchamp should love her brother, for he is a fine young man."

Again no answer was made to her remark: on which she again inserted her hand within the arm of Eugenius, and said, "You are a miserable companion, cousin."

"I am thinking," replied Eugenius;—and he hesitated.

"Of the pretty Sophia Beauchamp?" said Miss Fisher.

"No," said Eugenius, "no; but I have just recollected that I left a letter of the last importance upon my desk at the Hall, and forgot to put it into the letter-bag. Mr. Airley, I must leave Miss Fisher to your care, and run back to dispatch this letter:

it may not now be too late." And, so saying, he shook the lady's hand from his arm, and ran off in the same direction which Sophia had taken, which was, unfortunately, a direction diametrically opposite to that which led to the Hall.

Miss Fisher and I stood still, till the figure of Eugenius, and even the sound of his steps, were no longer to be perceived; and then the young lady, looking at me, said, "Well, Mr. Airley, this is pretty indeed! What will Mrs. Winifred say when I describe this scene to her?"

"What scene, Ma'am?" I asked, finding it very difficult to repress my indignation.

"This sentimental rencontre in the wood; with the flight of the young lady, and the pursuit of the young gentleman!"

"What will she say?" I rejoined; "why, she will honour and love Miss Beauchamp more than ever. I think, therefore, that, unless your object is to plead for Sophia, and to promote the union of these two lovely young people, you had better keep the story to yourself."

She reddened, and remarked, "I am

sure I do not wish to trouble their happiness."

I was too angry to say any more; I was really choking with indignation; the little man was in a most violent passion; I could hardly keep him within bounds: and I was never better pleased in my life, than to be accosted by a little boy from the village, bringing a bill to me from Mr. Claypole, which, although it was of no manner of consequence, I made to serve as an excuse for a hasty return to my lodgings, where I shut myself up until I believed that this impertinent woman would be engaged at the dinner-table. I then walked up to the parsonage, and learned, from my beloved Sophia, that she had made such speed to get out of Eugenius's way, that, although he had pursued her with the utmost rapidity, he had not been able to overtake her. "For indeed, Mr. Airley, indeed," she added, "if I were to trust myself one moment to converse with him, I should cast all my resolutions aside, and involve the person whom I love best on earth, next to my own family, in misery,

perhaps, for life. And yet," she added, "I sometimes doubt whether he is taking the way which will be most conducive to his happiness."

CHAPTER XX.

THE SWAN-POOL.

Written a few days after the last.

On the day succeeding that of the rencontre in the parsonage-dingle, Eugenius came to me in considerable distress and irritation of mind. I allowed him to explain the cause of his agitation: and, after several unsuccessful efforts to appear unconcerned, he commenced his confessions by taking three letters from his pocket, which he threw across the table to me, adding, "There, Mr. Airley, if you think it worth your while, give those letters a perusal."

I ascribed the rudeness of this action to the irritable condition of the young man's

mind: and, taking up the letters, found that the first, according to date, was from himself to Miss Beauchamp; the second, her answer; and the third, his reply.

The subject of his first letter was an urgent request that the young lady would grant him an interview. In her reply, I found a steady yet mild denial; and though this letter was very short and reserved, it was apparent that the paper had been blistered in more than one place by the tears of the writer. But, whereas it was evident that Sophia's paper had been moistened with her tears, it might have been rationally conjectured, from the tenor of Eugenius's reply, that he had dipped his pen in wormwood and gall.

The copy of this last letter was dated only that very morning. In this epistle, Eugenius had not spared his reproaches. He had called Sophia cold-hearted and cruel; and added, that he believed her regard was not for him, personally, but for the supposed heir of Roxobel: and that, since it had appeared to her, that, in uniting herself with him, she should have no

chance of being the first lady in Roxobel, her affection had entirely cooled, and she had withheld from him even the slightest token of regard. Other and more bitter sentiments disgraced the succeeding paragraphs: and the letter was concluded in the same cruel and passionate style.

I read this last letter, or copy of a letter, several times before I made any remark upon it: and then I asked, "And have you sent such a letter as this to Sophia?"

"I have," answered the young man.

"And what was your motive?"

"Because she would not see me," was his reply. "I have long suspected that she does not love me, and I am now convinced."

"What has convinced you?" I enquired. "Is it because you found her weeping over your resemblance in the wood?"

"It was not my resemblance," returned Eugenius.

"Not your resemblance!" I asked. "How do you know that? did you examine it?"

"I did not," he answered. "I was too much agitated."

"Then, I repeat, how are you informed that it was not your picture?"

"Caroline Fisher had time to examine it," he replied.

"How do you know that?" I asked.

"Because she says so," answered Eugenius.

"And how came you to question her on the subject, Sir?" I enquired.

"I did not question her," replied Eugenius.

"How then did this explanation originate?" was my next demand.

"From a simple question of Caroline's," replied Eugenius. "She asked me if Sophia had any other brother than Theodore: and, on my expressing surprise, she added, that she had noticed the picture which hung from Sophia's neck, and the face was unknown to her."

"And then you told her, I presume, that it was your own picture which she had seen, thus bestowing upon her the information which she desired?"

"No," returned Eugenius, "I did not: but I asked her if she were quite certain that she had never seen the original of the miniature. I left her to make what she could of my curiosity. She replied, that she had not; that she certainly never had; and described the dress of the figure, which was totally different from the gentleman-commoner's gown in which I was drawn."

"And are you so weak, Eugenius," I replied, "as to be thus easily deceived by an artful woman? and more than that, to act under such a delusion? But I am not surprised," I added, "for I never yet knew the man who, at one time or other of his life, was not the dupe of a deceitful woman." While I thus spoke, I felt very angry; and my countenance most probably betrayed the feelings of my heart.

"I am not the dupe of any woman," retorted Eugenius, haughtily. "I know and despise the sex too much, to be misled by any of them, Mr. Airley. It is not precisely what Miss Fisher chooses to say which has altered my opinion of Sophia:

but there is such a systematic coldness in her whole conduct towards me, that I should be infatuated, if I could suppose that she continues to have any regard for me."

"And this paper, blistered with her tears, is an indication of her coldness, is it, Eugenius?" I asked. And I held up the letter, and pointed to the marks upon the paper.

Eugenius, however, was not in a humour to be softened or convinced by any thing I could urge. He was angry with himself, and wanted to throw the blame on Sophia. He was unhappy; and was ready to condemn the whole world as being combined against his happiness. And although I offered to go to Sophia, and endeavour to undo the mischief which his last letter was calculated to have done, yet he would not accede to my proposal, but walked away as angry with me as with himself.

As Mrs. Judy still continued very ill, I could not see my Lucy for more than a moment for several days; and, when I did see her, she was so fatigued and depressed, that I could not persuade myself to add to

her sorrow by informing her of her brother's behaviour towards Sophia. Being thus deprived of the society of my amiable pupil at the Hall, I was obliged to content myself with frequently visiting the parsonage, and spending much of my time with the family there.

Dear as Sophia has ever been to me, I never loved her as I now do, now that I am the daily witness of her quiet resignation and determined fortitude; for I have reason to believe that she has prescribed to herself a plan of conduct with respect to Eugenius, which, with the divine assistance, she is resolved to pursue, in one unvaried course, through evil report and good report. When I walk out with her, we take the most retired paths, in order that we may avoid any disagreeable rencontre. We have not yet met with Eugenius in our rambles; though yesterday, as we were sitting to rest ourselves on the summit of one of the uplands at the back of the parsonage, we distinguished him at a distance in the vale below, walking arm-in-arm with Miss Fisher. At this

days, Eugenius had been accustomed to awaken the voice of Echo. Near this place, in a shadowy spot, well known, no doubt, to Sophia, he had carved her name upon the trunk of a tree; and near this tree was a stone, or fragment of rock, overgrown with moss, in the hollow side of which Lucy and Sophia, assisted by their brothers, had constructed a grotto. And in this little cave, thus lined with moss and stones of various colours, they had placed a Lilliputian table, laid out with acorn-cups and cockle-shells, in order, as the little ladies pretended, to provide suitable conveniences for Queen Mab and her train, if they should condescend to alight, some fine moonlight night, within the precincts of Roxobel.

We came to the tree of which I have spoken, and, sitting down on the fragment of rock, gave way for a time to our affecting meditations. No sounds reached our ears, excepting the rush of the Fall Cascade, the hummings of the summer-flies, and the warblings of the feathered tribes: and, for a while, we were neither of us

disposed to break the silence. At length, after some hesitation, Sophia asked me if I would have the kindness to give my attention, for a few minutes, to a subject on which she particularly wished to confer with me.

"I have had many thoughts lately, Mr. Airley," she said, "bitter and painful thoughts. I seem to have suddenly awakened from a delightful dream; from visions of happiness which are now for ever fled. I wonder how it was that I could ever have thought myself and my brother on an equality with the son and daughter of Mr. Lovel. But the simple manner in which I was educated led me into this error, of which I am now truly ashamed. I have no doubt that Eugenius still loves me, and that he would be easily induced to forego all his expectations from his aunts on my account; but then, Sir, might there not be some after-thoughts, some future regrets? and might I not have reason to blame myself? I acknowledge, that, when I first found that Mr. Lovel balanced between me and his prospects from his aunts, I was

hurt and offended; and, in that spirit, I wrote as I did to Mrs. Winifred. But when I had opportunity for reflection, I felt that my expectations from Eugenius had been romantic and improper: and then, and not till then, did I experience all the bitterness of my situation. The mind of Mr. Lovel is not such as would be satisfied in exchanging a palace for a cottage. In this particular he does not resemble his sister: he has not her simplicity of character; neither ought I to have expected it in him. I wish, therefore, my dear paternal friend, that you would take occasion to make him understand my sentiments on this subject. Tell him that I do think the match an unequal one; that I am sorry that I encouraged his regard as I did; and that it is my fixed determination, from this time forward, to consider our engagement as entirely at an end. Had I known more of the world some months since, Mr. Airley, I trust that I should not have suffered our intimacy to have attained such maturity. For surely," she added, "if a woman would be degraded by marrying beneath her, she ought by no

means to tempt the man whom she loves to do the same."

"My dear Sophia," I answered, "you are mistaking the case. With respect to rank and education, there is no disparity of any importance between you and Mr. Lovel. He therefore would have no right to think that he should degrade himself by making you the companion of his life. You are a gentleman's daughter; and a princess can be no more: for the character of the true gentleman is at once the most polished, the most dignified, and the most virtuous exhibition of the human creature. You are not now to learn, for the first time, my opinion on this subject: but, under your circumstances, my beloved daughter, I cannot but think that you are perfectly right in liberating Mr. Lovel from every sort of engagement, at least, for the present."

"Ah, Sir, the present!" repeated Sophia: "this is what I wish you to understand. Will you take occasion to represent to Mr. Lovel, that I have well considered the disadvantages which might arise to him from having it supposed that we are only

parted for a time, and that we are perhaps waiting the death of the Mrs. Helmsleys to renew our engagement. I have a dread of seeming to act a mean and underhand part: indeed, my dear Sir, I have that dread;"—and, as she spoke these last words, she burst into tears.

"No, Sir, no," she added, "not even for the happiness of living with Eugenius, would I, the Almighty helping me, do an unworthy action. Please, dear Sir, to be my friend and interpreter with dear Eugenius. But do not make him unhappy."

I allowed Sophia to think that I undertook to do all that she wished; though I could not quite understand how I was to convey such a message as this to Eugenius, without giving him pain: neither could I take any active measures to prevent a marriage, on which I considered that the whole happiness of the life of these young people seemed to depend. I therefore sat silent for some time, during which interval I perceived that the tears were falling in big drops from the dove's eyes of my Sophia. At length, however, I made up

my mind concerning what I should say, and spoke to the following effect.

"I have been considering, my beloved daughter," I said, "the various perplexing circumstances of your situation. Your dear father is not in a state to give you his cool and unbiassed advice; and, perhaps, he is not sufficiently acquainted with the ways of the world to direct you aright. But, my dear Sophia, if you will accept of me as your friend in this business, if you will be guided by me——"

She interrupted me. "O, my friend! my father!" she said; "my best and truest friend, after my own dear parents! and will you advise and direct me? Then, indeed, I shall be comparatively happy. You will conduct me in the way of holiness and honour. And did that way ever lead to any other end but that of peace? You will not allow me to do any thing but what is right; and you will be tender of my dear Eugenius. But do not think of me, Mr. Airley; think rather of him. If he can be happy and respectable in any other connexion, do not suffer me to be an obsta-

cle to his happiness. I hope, in time, that I shall be more easy; indeed, I am more easy now. At any rate, I am convinced, that, if I am enabled to act with Christian principle in this affair, I shall in the event find peace; if not in this present life, yet, assuredly, in that which is to come."

I hardly know what I replied to this lovely young creature, but I know what I felt; and that was, that if Eugenius could for one moment balance between his Sophia and any ideas of worldly pelf, he was utterly unworthy of her. However, I resolved to say nothing which might influence his conduct in either way for the present, but to leave the affair wholly in the hands of Providence, though I was cautious of what I said to her.

An agreement being thus established between myself and Sophia, we both seemed to be more easy: and, as we walked towards home, the conversation took a more general turn. I endeavoured to lead the mind of my young friend to the contemplation of the wisdom which is evinced in all the plans of Providence. "Divine Wisdom,"

I remarked, "is ever at work to counteract the effects of sin, by bringing good out of evil; while, on the other hand, the wicked one is always exerting himself to perplex the affairs of man: but the paternal love of the Father of spirits is constantly exercised in making the trials of his children redound more and more to their welfare and happiness. O my Sophia, let us pray that we may be kept blameless: and if we are so highly favoured as to have our petition granted us, we need not fear that all our present difficulties will terminate in our permanent advantage."

That was a sweet smile with which my Sophia thanked me for the consolation I had been enabled to administer to her, as we took our leave at the gate of the parsonage.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHANGES AT THE HALL.

VARIOUS solemn scenes have passed before my eyes, since I concluded my last memorandum.

My beloved Lucy, ever since the return of her brother, has been almost entirely confined to the chamber of poor Mrs. Judy, who, having had stroke after stroke, during the last few weeks, has been at length reduced to total insensibility.

In a short conference which I had with the dear young lady one day in the library, she remarked, "What a happiness it is that my poor aunt's mind was enlightened on religious subjects, previously to these dreadful paralytic attacks which have deprived her of her reason! But," added Lucy, "even under the oppression of palsy,

the power of grace has been beautifully exemplified in her." And then she enumerated many delightful instances of the patience, gentleness, and kindness, which the old lady had evinced; instances which were the more remarkable, as her temper had been far from amiable in former life.

At length, a few mornings ago, Mrs. Strickland entered my parlour, to inform me that poor Mrs. Judy had finished the term of her existence upon earth, having expired soon after midnight. I had scarcely finished my breakfast, when Mr. Jeffry Griffith's own servant came to request my attendance in the steward's room as soon as convenient. When I arrived there, I found the steward exhibiting that solemnity of aspect which people often assume when they would wish to be thought in grief.

"Mr. Airley," said he, "so our excellent lady is at length departed, and has left many sorrowing friends. Mr. Barnaby Semple was sent for last night, precisely at eleven; and the ladies were roused from their beds about midnight. Miss Lovel had not left the sick-chamber since the

afternoon: and all was over, Mr. Airley, before one o'clock."

The steward added a few more particulars of similar importance; and then, cheering up a little, he entered upon a subject more interesting to himself. "There is a will, Mr. Airley," he said: "it was signed only a few days before the poor lady became incapacitated; and, by that will, you and I are appointed executors."

At this piece of information I was perfectly amazed, though I did not feel sorry, as I thought my appointment augured well for the young Lovels. I hinted as much to the steward, who entirely coincided with me, though he assured me that he knew nothing of the contents of the will; adding, that it was already in his possession, but was not to be opened till after the funeral.

He then adverted to the situation of the old lady's affairs. He informed me that one-third of the Roxobel and Clifton estates had been bequeathed to Mrs. Judy by her mother, without condition; that this portion had always produced three thousand pounds a year; and that the old lady hav-

ing never expended one half of her income, her property had greatly accumulated; so much so, indeed, that she had been able to place a very large sum in the funds, besides amassing plate and jewels to a considerable amount.

I had before been informed that Mrs. Judy's portion of the estate was situate on the eastern side of Roxobel. I had been told, that it included the Warren, the land about Burrow-Town down to the river, and the gamekeeper's house, together with almost all the country in the same direction beyond the Park, and a large tract of land in the parish of Clifton. All this I now hoped would soon be in the possession of Eugenius. And I added, in my own mind, "If he does not now make himself and Sophia happy, I will renounce him; I will not have another word to say to him."

"Well," said I to the steward, "is there any thing that I can do now? Can I assist in any way before the funeral?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Griffith; "there is a good deal to be attended to before the will is opened. I have a paper here, signed by

Mrs. Judy, in which she gives many directions respecting her obsequies. The paper itself is penned by Miss Lovel, and was probably dictated, in some places, by her, for it will be a glorious affair for the poor. It will quite outshine your funeral of poor Mrs. Goodwill; and indeed it ought to do so; though I think some hints were taken from it. Every labourer in the parish, who is a married man, is to have a full suit of grey; and every poor woman, who is the head of a family, or has been such, is to have a grey cloak: and Bibles are to be given, one to each householder. Cold meat and beer too are to be given to all the poor; and scarfs, and hatbands, and gloves, to all the superior people. There is also a sum of money to be divided among the cottagers."

"You are right in supposing that Miss Lovel had a share in suggesting some of these things, Mr. Griffith," I observed. "But if the young lady suggested, the old lady acquiesced; therefore we will give due credit to both. And if all Mrs. Judy's dying remembrances are as pleasing as

these, Mr. Griffith, her memory will be precious in Roxobel."

"Well, Sir, I hope they may be," said the steward; "and that you and I may not be forgotten."

"As to me, Mr. Griffith," I rejoined, "I want nothing whatever from the old lady, and shall not expect any thing: yet I will confess that I am pleased to find myself named as an executor, for the reason which I have already assigned."

"I believe you," replied the steward, "I really do believe you, when you say that you don't expect or wish for a halfpenny; and yet there is but one other man under the sun to whom I would give the same credit, and that is Dr. Beauchamp."

Having finished my business with the steward, I proceeded towards the library; but in the long gallery I encountered Mrs. Nuttall, with a face as long as my arm, and as sallow as spite could make it. I accosted her with all due politeness; but she returned my salutation with so ill a grace, that I was convinced she must have been anguring no good to herself from the

circumstance of my having been chosen an executor. I enquired after her lady: on which she took occasion to say, that she had no good report to give of her health; for, what with deaths, sicknesses, and contrarieties, her poor lady, she feared, would soon be brought to partake of the fate of Mrs. Judy. I perceived that she expected me to ask the signification of the word "contrarieties;" but I seldom propound questions to duennas; and I accordingly bowed and passed on.

Soon after I entered the library, I was joined by Eugenius and Lucy; the latter of whom looked very pale, and appeared to be much fatigued. The former also exhibited the appearance of anxiety and dejection. We talked much of poor Mrs. Judy; but nothing was said on those subjects which had been discussed in Mr. Griffith's room.

As it was a point of etiquette that none of the family of the Hall should be seen abroad till after the funeral, I proceeded alone to the parsonage in the afternoon, and administered a cordial to the poor doctor

by informing him of the success which had attended his Lucy's endeavours to prepare Mrs. Judy for her departure. Nothing, however, was mentioned at the parsonage respecting Mrs. Judy's disposal of her property.

From this time till the funeral was over, I was constantly engaged with Mr. Griffith in ordering and arranging the ceremonial. Meanwhile, the two old ladies kept themselves shut up in their separate apartments, and Mrs. Winifred kept her bed. Eugenius was also confined to the house: but as Miss Fisher haunted the library, I was compelled, when desirous of seeing him without interruption, to visit him in his own chamber. During this period, he was particularly depressed: and though he mentioned Sophia to me more than once, yet it was in a way which I could not understand; for he seemed to think that she either did not love him, or was unworthy of him. He appeared to entertain the notion that she had formed a regard for some other person: and, in consequence of this, his mind was altogether most un-

comfortable. Lucy sometimes joined our party in her brother's room: and, although she was certainly not in her usual spirits, there was no appearance, in her manner, of that kind of dejection which I had remarked in her brother.

When alone with her one morning, she told me plainly, that it was by her advice that I had been appointed executor to her aunt's will; adding, "If my aunt has followed my advice in other respects, there will be an end of all the troubles of Eugenius and Sophia, and I shall soon have a home with them in the old mansion at the end of the park; for we will find another house for the gamekeeper. And if Eugenius cannot be content with three thousand a year, and instantly resolve to marry his lovely Sophia, I shall pity him no longer, and shall advise Sophia to try to forget him, and hang his picture on the tree, for Caroline Fisher to take down if she pleases."

"And you really hope," I said, "that the property is willed to Eugenius?"

"I do," she answered; "though I will not raise his hopes. And this I know, that

my poor aunt, till very lately, intended to have left it to Mrs. Winifred; thinking that it would of course descend from her to my brother. But after that scene in the arbour, she changed her mind, sent for her solicitor, and made another will; and, if I am not much mistaken, it will be found greatly in favour of Eugenius. This last will," added Miss Lucy, "was executed without Mrs. Winifred's knowledge; and I have reason to believe that when she heard of it, which happened only a few days before her poor sister's death, she was excessively angry. And Mrs. Nuttall was like a fury, and vented her spleen on every one who came near her, quarrelling with every person in the house excepting me and Mrs. Grizzy. But if Eugenius obtains the estate, she may storm as much as she likes; and Taffy may have the Hall and all that belongs to it: we shall be able to spare it."

"Taffy have the Hall, Miss Lucy!" I exclaimed.

"O yes," she answered. "Mrs. Winifred will give it him, if she can find a de-

cent pretext for so doing. I am convinced of this: for, since Mrs. Judy's death, and since Mrs. Grizzy has been shut up in her room, Taffy has been constantly with Mrs. Winifred, and is more in favour than ever: for which reason I never go near her. And, when summoned to her bed-side by Mrs. Nuttall, I have ventured to say, more than once, "When you can assure me that your nephew is not with my aunt, I will accept her invitation: but, as I do not indulge any sordid views towards Mrs. Winifred, I will not be induced, even by her, to forget what is due to my own respectability."

"What!" I asked; "do you mean to say, Miss Lucy, that Mr. Nuttall visits your aunt, now that she is confined to her room?"

"My aunt has a range of apartments," replied Miss Lovel; "and I do not pretend to say in which it is that she receives Taffy's visits.—I only know that he is with her continually."

"I am more and more perplexed," I said. "What can be her motives for this extraordinary conduct?"

"Fear of Mrs. Nuttall, I think," replied Miss Lovel; "for she is absolutely under the power of the housekeeper, I am convinced: it is more and more evident every day."

"Well," I rejoined, "we may as well wave this discussion, Miss Lovel. I cannot say that I am without my suspicions; but I will not give utterance to them, even to you. I expect, however, that a very short time will unravel this mystery."

Mrs. Judy's funeral took place on the seventh day after her death: and every thing was conducted with becoming solemnity. The whole country was collected; but, being myself in the second mourning-coach, I could not obtain a full view of the persons who crowded the park and the churchyard. Lucy attended the procession; following the remains of her aunt with looks of touching and unaffected tenderness to the vault of her ancestors. She appeared perfectly calm throughout the ceremony; and, no doubt, her reflections were infinitely agreeable.

The solemn pageantry of a magnificent

funeral is always to me an affecting sight: for the vanity of all human efforts to rescue a fellow-creature from the obscurity and forgetfulness of the tomb, never appears so striking as on such an occasion. When all the pompous obsequies are performed, the doom of the poor corpse must remain precisely the same as if it had been committed to the earth without a single ceremonial. Dust must be mingled with dust, and ashes with ashes: and nothing short of the assurance that the departed is united with the Saviour, and made a partaker of the blessings purchased by his death, can shed one ray of light over the place of sepulture. Regarded in this point of view, the grave of the poorest Christian displays infinitely more glory than the tomb of Mausolus, or the golden coffin of Alexander, the conqueror of the world.

On my return to my lodgings I was apprized, by a note from the steward, that my presence would be required at the Hall, at twelve o'clock the next day, to assist at the reading of the will. I could hardly have believed that the opening and reading of

any will could have agitated me so much. I could not sleep for half an hour together during the whole night; and when I did catch a transient slumber, I dreamed of nothing but of lawyers in spectacles, rolls of parchment, tags, and seals: and once, indeed, I fancied that I was about to be strangled in a knot of red tape.

At length the morning appeared; and I arose, and took a strong dish of coffee, to raise my spirits. I counted every hour till the great clock struck eleven, and then, taking up my watch, I held it in my hand till the moment arrived for commencing my walk to the Hall. When I reached the house, I knocked at the door, and it was opened to me by Mr. Porter, with more than his usual solemnity.

Why is a person often most inclined to laugh when he is least at ease? Can any one answer this question? Whether the problem can be solved or not, I believe that it is founded on fact; for I had much difficulty in preventing myself from indulging in a burst of merriment, as the important major-domo ushered me across

the great hall, and along the matted passage, to the door of the oak parlour, where he announced my name with as loud a voice as if I had been a perfect stranger.

Never did I think the oak parlour so gloomy and comfortless as on the present occasion. The blinds of the windows were partly lowered, casting a shade over the room, and the figures which were seated within seemed as stiff and formal as if they had been chiselled from a block of marble. The members of the family were arranged in a circle, according to precedence; Mrs. Winifred being placed first, Mrs. Grizzy next, Miss Lovel near Mrs. Grizzy, and, next to her, Miss Fisher. Opposite to the ladies sat Mr. Lovel, and a vacant chair was standing ready for me between Mr. Lovel and Mr. Jeffry Griffith. At the table was Mr. Watson, Mrs. Judy's solicitor, holding in his hand the formidable document in which we all felt so deeply interested. Every individual of the party was dressed in the deepest mourning: and, as I entered, the eyes of each person were raised, and the body bent solemnly for-

ward; and I was permitted to seat myself without exchanging a word.

I was followed into the room by Mrs. Nuttall, carrying a ponderous salver of biscuits and wine, which she handed round the circle. Each of the ladies, with the exception of Miss Lucy, took a glass of wine, and sipped a little, while the gentlemen drank theirs off. Mrs. Nuttall, having then handed the biscuits round, took a turn behind the chairs of the ladies, and disappeared through an inner door, which I observed that she left ajar. I was not certain whether this manœuvre was noticed by the rest of the party; but I was perfectly aware of it myself, and had no doubt that the duenna had provided herself with a situation in which she might hear all that was passing. However, I trusted that at this time she would hear nothing very agreeable to herself.

While these preparations were going forward, Miss Lucy sat with her eyes fixed on the floor, seeming resolved not to look up on any account.

The duenna having disappeared, Mrs.

Winifred uttered a long sigh, and said, "Mr. Watson, I believe all is now ready: let us conclude this painful business as soon as possible."

Mr. Watson bowed to Mrs. Helmsley as she spoke, and then proceeded to take out his spectacles, wiping them, and fixing them in their proper place, with more deliberation than even this very important occasion appeared to require: after which, he hemmed several times, and made an unusual crackling with the parchment as he proceeded to unfold it. He then commenced his reading, making a pause whereever the sense would possibly admit of one.

There was a long preamble, of which I remember little but the word "spinster," and then came the names of the executors; and Mr. Jeffry Griffith coughed and looked modest on the occasion, while I thought that I could not do better than sit perfectly still.

Next came the important clause which contained the nomination of the heir. And, as if to torment the auditors with an unusual trial of their patience, the whole of the extensive property, comprehending the

fields, tenements, coppices, bonds, mortgages, with certain monies in the funds and elsewhere, was distinctly and accurately described, before the name was mentioned: during which interval, my heart beat with a degree of violence which I have seldom experienced. And, indeed, I was totally incapable of looking up, or of observing any one, until the heir, or rather, I should say, the heiress, was named, and the name was Lucy Lovel.

At the sound of this name I looked up, and beheld, at one glance, a deathlike paleness on the features of Mrs. Winifred, perfect satisfaction depicted on the countenance of Mrs. Grizzy, and amazement and disappointment on the lovely face of my Lucy, who, interrupting the reader, said, "Are you not mistaken, Mr. Watson? Please to look again. Surely the name is not *Lucy* Lovel. Pray look again."

"Lovel, Lucy Lovel," repeated Mr. Watson, smiling graciously in the young lady's face. "Miss Lovel, I congratulate you on your immense accession of fortune. I have made no mistake: the will was dictated

to me by Mrs. Judy. And would you permit me to proceed, I should have it in my power to explain, from poor Mrs. Judy's own dictation, the reasons why she selected you for her heiress."

"It is of no use," said Lucy; "I will have none of these things. I have no right to them, and I am resolved not to accept them."

Every person present who was not too much overpowered by their own feelings, looked at Lucy, as if she had suddenly taken leave of her senses: and, indeed, I wished her to restrain herself, and gave her a very severe look, which she seemed to understand, for she again fixed her eyes upon the ground, while the tears traced each other down her cheeks.

Mr. Watson then proceeded to mention another sum, which Mrs. Judy had reserved for the payment of certain legacies which were enumerated. The jewels of the deceased were bequeathed to Mrs. Winifred, and her plate to Mrs. Grizzy. She also particularly recommended to her younger sister the care of her nephew Eugenius.

To Eugenius she had left two thousand pounds, and she had set apart a hundred a year for life for Mr. Barnaby Semple. One thousand pounds was to be divided between Mr. Griffith and me, in equal portions. Five hundred pounds were bequeathed to her old servant, Susan; and various smaller sums were allotted to the domestics at the Hall, none of whom were forgotten.

What pleased me very much was a bequest of twenty pounds a year to Mrs. Tristram, for her life, on condition that she took care of Chlöe as long as it lived. To this clause was a curious addition, intimating, that, as the testatrix knew Mrs. Tristram to be a conscientious woman and a good Christian, she felt assured that she would not only endeavour to prolong the life of the little animal, but would also strive to render that life easy.

Among other things the sum of five pounds a year for life was to be paid to Mr. Pen Map.

When the perusal of the will was concluded;—a will, which, like many others,

or perhaps most others, had displeased more persons than it had satisfied;—there was a solemn pause. No one dared to look up: and we all sat motionless, and as it were spell-bound, till Mrs. Winifred arose, and, courtesying to the company, sailed out of the room. She was immediately followed by the ladies in the order in which they had sat. At the same moment, I seized the arm of Eugenius, before he could utter a word, and drew him out of the house to my own lodgings: and there, having seated him, I had leisure to observe his countenance. His face was deadly pale; and his expression was that of fixed despair.

"I hate myself, Mr. Airley," were the first words which he uttered. "The events of this day have shewn me my own heart, and have made me detest myself. Why can I not rejoice in the prosperity of my Lucy and my Theodore? Why cannot I exult and be elated with their happiness?" And the young man leaned his head upon his hand, and, no doubt, shed tears, though he suffered me not to see them.

I said what I could to comfort him:

but he heard me with impatience, and starting from his seat, and striking his hand upon his forehead, "O Sophia! Sophia!" he exclaimed; "I am miserable on every side."

A light quick step was at that moment heard upon the stairs: and the next instant, the door was opened, and Lucy entered, all flushed with haste, without a hat, and her fair hair in beautiful disorder; her deep mourning adding a new brilliancy to her charming complexion.

She did not appear to notice me, nor did she make any apology for her unceremonious intrusion; but, advancing swiftly to her brother, and throwing her arms round his neck, and kissing his cheek with a more than sisterly affection, she said, "Dearest Eugenius, be not uneasy; it shall be all the same: it is, it must be all the same. I will not have an inch of their lands. All that they have given me is and shall be yours; and I never will marry any man, no, not Theodore, unless he has the same views of justice as myself." Then turning to me, "Mr. Airley," she continued, "take

this paper, and keep it as a witness against me, if ever I should be so lost, so base, as to change my mind. Take it, and receive it as my act and deed. And may the Almighty cease to befriend me, if ever I retract from the words which I have written."

Eugenius, as if stupified by wonder, had drawn back from the embraces of his sister, and was standing looking at her with an expression as fixed and pale as that of a marble statue.

"Read the paper, Mr. Airley," said Lucy, exultingly.

I obeyed; and read aloud as follows.

"Having been grievously distressed and disappointed, by the tendency of my beloved aunt Mrs. Judith Helmsley's last testament, I here solemnly declare, that it is my fixed will and purpose, as soon as ever I arrive at lawful age, to restore all the lands and houses which have been willed to me to the rightful heir, my beloved and only brother, Eugenius Lovel. And as I hope for the blessing of the Almighty, I resolve, that I will never con-

sent to marry any man who will not bind himself, by bond, to consent to this restoration of my aunt's legacy to the lawful heir." This paper was signed "Lucy Lovel," and was regularly dated.

Having read the paper, I looked from Lucy to Eugenius, and from Eugenius to Lucy. The eyes of the young lady beamed with an expression of heavenly feelings which was truly delightful; and it cannot be wondered at that I looked at her as if I were beholding an angel. But the young man was wholly overcome. Putting his hand again to his forehead, he sank on a sofa, near which he stood, uttering a deep, very deep sigh, his head at the same time dropping against the side of the couch.

Lucy fell on her knees before him, extending her arms to embrace him, and calling upon him in accents the most sweet and tender that I ever remember to have heard. "My Eugenius! my friend! my brother!" she exclaimed; "my beloved Eugenius! my best friend! my only brother! why this distress? Is not all I have on earth at your disposal? For your sake, I would now re-

joice to be as sure of all the estates of Roxobel as I am of poor aunt Judy's portion. I was never covetous before; but I shall be so in future for your sake. Look at me, Eugenius; look at me, my brother dear. Again I say, that all I have on earth is yours and your Sophia's. I have always said, 'I will have none of their lands,' and they shall gain nothing by giving them to me: I will have none of them!"

"Noble creature!" I exclaimed. *I* could not help saying it. But Lucy paid me no attention; for she still continued to call upon her brother.

"Look at me, my Eugenius," she said; "look at your Lucy: tell me that you are happy, that you are contented. What more can I do? Mr. Airley, please to tell me. Must I wait till I am of age? Can I *not* now put Eugenius in possession of the estates or of the money?"

"The money, my Lucy!" I said. "Do you mean to give your brother the money?"

"Why not?" she answered. "I don't want it."

"But it amounts to a very large sum," I remarked.

"I am glad it does," she answered: "but I don't want it. If we have enough to enable us to live as they do at the parsonage, I want no more: I will have no more. But, Eugenius, dear, why don't you speak?" And she rose from her knees, and, placing herself on the couch by his side, "Mr. Airley," she said, "he is very pale, and very cold. Cannot you give him something to refresh him?"

He was indeed pale, and seemed almost fainting. I accordingly brought him a glass of wine, and Lucy forced him to swallow it; after which, he revived, and, drawing a deep sigh, "Oh, Lucy! my Lucy!" he exclaimed, "you know not what you have made me suffer—how you have made me, by one noble action, to hate, to despise, to abhor myself! My God, forgive me," added the young man, lifting up his fine eyes. "Who can describe the corruption of my heart? How infinitely vile have I been!—the slave of envy, covetousness, and ambition! My

God, forgive me, and purify my heart. Lucy! Sophia!—I am unworthy of such a sister, or such a wife. Never, no, never, my angel sister, will I receive your gift. May your lands be blessed to you and to your Theodore! You have conquered, you have more than conquered, my lovely one." And this charming brother and sister sank into each other's arms, and wept without restraint.

Again, however, when the parties had recovered a little, the generous contest respecting the estate was renewed; and neither would yield, till it was at *length* suggested that I should become the arbitrator. On this, I said that I thought much ought to depend on what might take place before Miss Lovel came of age;—that if, at that period, it should not appear that the other two Mrs. Helmsleys had made any provision for Eugenius, the estate might be given to him as Lucy wished, but that the money should still be hers;—and that, in the mean time, what had passed that day in my room should be kept secret from every one but Sophia. Thus

our contest terminated: and Eugenius, being wholly subdued, charged me with various penitent and affectionate messages to Sophia; which messages were received with a degree of joy which the lovely young lady in vain endeavoured to conceal.

CHAPTER XXII.

Written after a considerable interval.

It is so long since I added any thing to my memorandums, that I must look back to know in what part of my history I broke off.

Two months or more are past since I last wrote. I have been from home, and have been very ill, and could not write. I was taken ill immediately after the agitating scene of the reading of the will: and as Mr. Barnaby Semple insisted that I should change the air, I resolved to go to the sea. With Mrs. Winifred's approbation, Eugenius accompanied me. And when we were comfortably settled in our lodgings, Mrs. Beauchamp and the doctor joined us; the doctor having obtained permission

for Miss Lovel to be with his daughter during the absence of the family—a permission which was the more readily granted, as Miss Fisher still remained at the Hall. The two young ladies kept house very closely during our absence, never once going to the Hall, although Mrs. Winifred paid Lucy several visits in her garden-chair.

During our residence at the sea bathing-place, which was the most retired situation we could select, we heard of the marriage of Mr. Barnaby Semple with Miss Kitty Finchley. The festivities took place at Mr. Claypole's, but were conducted privately, on account of the recent death of Mrs. Judy Helmsley, for whom Mr. Semple always expresses great regard, as well he may, for she has been his best friend. Lucy also informed us, by letter, of the proceedings of my family at the Rock. She gave me good accounts of Ellen, but alluded repeatedly to the ill usage which Mary Grosvenor received from her husband, and to the declining state of health in which she found that poor woman.

At length, our time at the sea having expired, we gladly prepared for a return to our lovely Roxobel, and arrived safely at home on the last day of the week.

Those must travel far, who would find a scene so lovely as that which Roxobel presented when we first got sight of it on the road from Beckington. The trees had not yet changed a single leaf. It was an evening richly decorated with gold and purple clouds; and the foliage was fresh and glittering with a late shower. We had all been cheerful during the preceding part of the day; and the doctor looked better than I had seen him for months. But as we approached our home, our lovely home, too many interesting and affecting thoughts crowded on our minds to permit us to carry on any thing like a continued conversation. The hills above the parsonage, no doubt, painfully reminded the poor father of his son, now far away, and recalled to Eugenius the perplexities in which he was involved, with regard to the sister of his friend. Neither were the lovely features of the opening scenes des-

titute of such associations as brought sorrowful feelings to my own mind, and also to that of Mrs. Beauchamp. Hence, during the whole course of our drive between Beckington and Roxobel, we spoke hardly a word: and I saw, with pain, that intensity of feeling had withdrawn the colour entirely from the cheeks of the doctor.

We were to pass the door of my lodgings; but I requested that the coach might be stopped only for a moment, that I might enquire if all was well, and deliver up my luggage to my landlady. I resolved myself to go on with the family to the parsonage.

Mrs. Strickland was so glad to see us, that the tears came into her eyes.

Mr. Barnaby Semple, seeing the carriage over the way, ran to congratulate us on our return, and to inform us that all was as usual at the Hall and the parsonage. On this occasion, I did not forget to say something civil to him on the subject of his marriage, though I was not perhaps in the very best possible mood for compliments of this kind; and when a marriage has been talked of for more than seven years,

a doubt sometimes arises, when it actually takes place, whether it is altogether a subject for congratulation. However, my pretty speeches were very well received by the bridegroom, and still better by the bride; who, having seen us from the parlour-window, was the next minute at the side of the carriage.

We proceeded straight from my lodgings, through the park, to the dear parsonage, where, we trusted, that our lovely young ladies would be found waiting for us. I expected that Eugenius would have got out at the Hall; but he made no movement to that effect, and the good doctor never thought of suggesting it. He therefore accompanied us; and I was anxious to observe what would ensue.

The carriage had scarcely reached the green gate so often spoken of, before Lucy and Sophia appeared, looking better and easier than I had long seen them. There was not altogether that radiance of joy which I have sometimes seen playing on the brows of these lovely young women. There was sunshine there, however; though

it was a sunshine somewhat overclouded in the one, and in the other misty as in an April shower. I was the first to get out and shake hands with them; then followed Mrs. Beauchamp; then the doctor; and afterwards Eugenius. Lucy ran into her brother's arms, and Sophia into her father's: and, while Sophia was leading her father to the house, I perceived that Lucy had set herself to confirm the doubting steps of her brother. As I lingered a little behind, I heard her say, "Come on, and take no notice; they will not bid you go. Say nothing to remind our dear father of your situation; and he will not recollect any thing that has happened, which might keep you away."

In the beloved dining-room, we found the table set out with all the simple and fragrant elegances of the garden and the dairy. Sophia had seated her father on a sofa, placed for him by the table; while Mrs. Beauchamp had taken a chair. Sophia then assumed her usual position at the tea-table: and as Eugenius, Lucy, and I, entered the room, the doctor called to the for-

mer, and pointing to a chair, said, "Come, my boy, I have not seen your bright countenance at this table for a long time. Sit down by your dear sister; and let me look at you, and try to fancy how it will be when Theodore comes back, and restores the health and sunshine we have lost."

Eugenius looked timidly at Sophia, (who, on her side, seemed to see nothing but the delf and china immediately before her,) and he dropped into a chair, as I afterwards told him, like a naughty boy who expects every moment to be made to get up, and stand in a corner. A look from Lucy, at this instant, had nearly overset my gravity; for I was just in that kind of April temper, in which I did not know whether to laugh or cry. I, however, commanded myself, and set Mrs. Beauchamp to talk, by saying that the bread-and-butter was sweeter at Roxobel than in any other part of the world: for it must be remarked, that, when Mrs. Beauchamp is once set afloat on the subject of the management of a dairy, she is sure to continue on one tack for a long time, without need of sail or oar. In

the mean time, Sophia proceeded with her decoctions, though I doubted whether she had a very accurate idea of what she was about, since her fair face glowed with crimson, and she never once raised her eyes.

At length the doctor, addressing Eugenius, put to him one or two questions of rather an embarrassing nature. One of them was, whether he meant to take up his residence, for the future, at the Hall or the parsonage. "You know," added the good man, "that you are always welcome to your little nook under this roof."

"I know it, Sir," replied Eugenius: "but I also know that I am not worthy to come under your roof."

The kind father started; and now, for the first time, he recollected the state of affairs between the young gentleman and his own daughter. But Dr. Beauchamp was not the man to get out of a scrape of this kind by any of those turns which are so well understood by worldly persons. He was, therefore, much confused; began several sentences, and broke them off in the mid-

dle; and, at length, said, after all, "I have not a head for these things. You know, Eugenius, that I love you as if you were a child of my own. Do what you believe to be right; do what is best for your own happiness, my children. But, whatever you do, act virtuously, as in the sight of God, leaving the result of your actions to his all-wise disposal. Yet I could wish for the return of those happy seasons which we once enjoyed," added the tender father, "when my boys and girls played together like the little harmless fawns in the park. But that time is past, and never will return. Our Theodore, too, is far away; the world has broken into our paradise; and I am overpowered in witnessing the work of destruction among my fairest flowers." Thus speaking, he bent his head, and the tears fell in large drops from his eyes.

On seeing this, Eugenius and Sophia sprang from their seats, and were the next instant kneeling before him.

"Bless you, my children—my beloved ones!" exclaimed the good man. "Receive a father's blessing. And O that I could

this instant behold and bless another pair as lovely and as dear!"

"What is to be done now?" thought I. "Surely, Prudence has taken wing, and is not likely to alight again on the walls of the parsonage!" And, in truth, for some minutes, even Sophia seemed to be entirely carried away by her feelings, and allowed Eugenius to speak his whole mind to her, kneeling, as they still were, by her father's couch. The doctor, however, being presently overcome by his own emotions, asked to be led to his chamber. Sophia took the opportunity of retiring with him; and Mrs. Beauchamp followed.

I was then left with Lucy and Eugenius: and it cannot be doubted that our conversation ran upon what had just passed.

Eugenius was desirous of settling the matter at once, and talked of purchasing the ring the next day. Lucy was likewise of opinion that he ought to do so; adding, "You know, Eugenius, the estate is ready for you, and therefore there can be no demur about how you are to live."

"If you mean your estate, Lucy," replied Eugenius, "I have told you before that I will have nothing to do with it."

"Nor I either," rejoined Lucy. "I will never take possession of that which properly belongs to another."

"But even if I were mean enough to think of robbing my sister," said Eugenius, "she might perhaps have a husband who would not——"

Lucy stopped him short, by placing her fair hand upon his lips.

"I will never have any husband but Theodore," she replied. "No, nor would I even marry Theodore, if he could be unjust. But Mr. Airley has undertaken to settle this business," she added, smiling; "and I know his mind on the subject."

"Do not be too confident of that, Miss Lucy," I answered.

"I believe I am pretty well acquainted with it," she rejoined. "It is this:—you would wish *me* to have the *money* that my aunt left me, and Eugenius the *land;* and to this I will willingly consent. And, indeed, I think you have judged rightly

and fairly, Mr. Airley: and we shall agree on this point as well as on every other."

"I have never expressed my opinion at all, you saucy little lady," I said.

"No, not in words," she answered: "but I understand you without the aid of words."

"But, Miss Lovel," I remarked, "you must recollect that you are not yet in possession; and that, till you are of age, you are only to draw for certain sums supposed to be for your maintenance and education; and that the extent of these sums is left to the determination of your trustees."

"Pray, how much will you let me have, then, Mr. Airley?" asked Lucy. "Remember that I am an heiress, and shall want a great deal." And then turning to Eugenius, she added, "You and Sophia shall have every farthing that I can squeeze out of this covetous little man; and you can live in this house: and with your money, and Sophia's, you will be really too rich."

"Come, come, my children," I said; "the question is not now respecting money: we

have enough, and more than enough, among us. But there are other things to be considered. Will Sophia forfeit her word which she has pledged to Mrs. Winifred? Or, supposing that she were willing to do so, would she be justified therein?"

"Justified!" repeated Eugenius. And the young gentleman used a vast deal of logic to prove to me that a promise made in a passion is not binding when that passion is over; insisting that Sophia's engagement to Mrs. Winifred was by no means valid, inasmuch as it was given under the influence of violent anger.

Our discussion was long; and Eugenius was getting more and more inflamed by it, when it was suddenly interrupted by a servant bringing a letter to me from Sophia. The purport of this letter was to request me to explain her sentiments to Eugenius.

In this letter she did not scruple to acknowledge that her regard for Mr. Lovel was of such a nature as never to be transferred; being built, not only on esteem, but on an intercourse of the most affectionate and

endearing kind which had subsisted from infancy. "But," added she, "in considering, as I have often done, that Mr. Lovel was brought up with the prospect of some time or other possessing the Roxobel estates, I have been led to see, that if, through my means, he should forfeit those estates, it may hereafter be a subject of regret, not only to himself, but also to his children, should he be blessed with any. Considerations of this kind influenced me, in making my engagement with Mrs. Winifred; and they now induce me to request you, dear Mr. Airley, to state to Mr. Lovel, that, notwithstanding all that has passed this evening, during a scene in which I betrayed more of my feelings than I could have wished, I still remain fixed in my resolution not to renew any intercourse with him till I am of age. Neither do I consider him as being otherwise than entirely at liberty, with unimpeached honour, to form any other connexion which may conduce to his happiness or advantage." A tear had fallen on the word "happiness" I perceived, and had nearly washed

it away. The letter concluded in this place, and the signature was hardly legible.

I immediately handed it to Eugenius; and Lucy read it over his shoulder.

I felt truly sorry for the young man, and yet could not but admire and pity Sophia. He read it without speaking a word; and then, putting it into his pocket without asking or receiving permission, he walked out of the room: and I persuaded Lucy to follow, and to endeavour to console *him*.

Since that day, I have seen Eugenius several times: but he has not renewed the subject. He looks sad, but seems composed. Sophia has not been seen abroad. Lucy hardly knows what advice to give, especially as she perceives that Mrs. Grizzy is rapidly declining, and as she has reason to think that her aunt *would* not approve of a connexion between Eugenius and Sophia, the old lady having hinted more than once that Miss Fisher was in her opinion a most desirable wife for her nephew Lovel.

Poor Dr. Beauchamp has not derived so much benefit from the sea as we had

hoped; and Mrs. Beauchamp seems low. No news as yet has reached us from Theodore. On the whole, therefore, we are all somewhat depressed in spirits: and the change of the leaf, and the whistling of the autumnal winds, seem too congenial with our feelings.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TORVILLE.

More than a month has elapsed since I returned to our lovely Roxobel. Since that period, I have visited all the cottages, and have had some conversations with Black Tom, who I think will not wholly disappoint me. I am pleased to observe that the good points in his character are becoming more conspicuous; and, though he is bound and tied down so closely with the cords of evil habits that a divine hand alone can set him free, yet I do not despair that his deliverance will eventually be effected.

Affairs at the Rock wear a melancholy aspect. Mary Grovesnor is in a feeble state of health, and her husband has proved himself to be a complete brute.

Lucy and I, however, take good care that the daughter of the excellent Mrs. Goodwill shall not suffer want. Ellen behaves most affectionately; devoting her whole time to the care of her little brother, who would otherwise be neglected, as his mother is not able to pay him the necessary attentions.

Since I wrote the foregoing, I have a curious history to relate. I am fated, it appears, to meet with strange adventures at Roxobel, and to be introduced, on many occasions, behind those scenes which I might only have expected to have viewed at a distance.

Mrs. Winifred is always planning occasions for bringing Eugenius and Miss Fisher into each other's society. There is a fine seat to be seen about six miles from Roxobel: and, notwithstanding the gloominess of the season, Mrs. Winifred insisted, a few days ago, that Eugenius should ride over to it in company with this young lady. Eugenius entreated Lucy to be of the party; and, as the morning was particularly fine, I took the opportunity of

walking to the parsonage, and taking Sophia with me into the park.

I was pleased to see that Sophia was cheerful. Indeed, she has certainly been more happy since the interview with Eugenius on the day of our return. She, no doubt, feels a stronger assurance of the constancy of his regard; though she seldom mentions his name, even in our most confidential discourse, endeavouring, I am persuaded, to be as little occupied as possible with her own affairs.

Allured by the brightness of the morning, we had wandered about for some time, when, coming to the eastern side of Torville, where the distance through the woods to the house is much shorter than on the other side, we were surprised by the lively yelpings of a dog; and forthwith, from amid the bushes, sprang out the little white animal which Sophia had so carefully nursed, and on which she had bestowed the name of Snow. It was pleasing to observe the joy he expressed in seeing his friends. His eyes sparkled; he jumped upon us; then presented his head to be

patted, and then made several circles round us; and at length, taking the border of Sophia's dress in his mouth, he attempted to draw her forward towards Torville.

At first, this manœuvre of the little quadruped did not surprise us. Sophia endeavoured to withdraw her dress from his hold, and succeeded once or twice; but he still persevered in seizing it, and attempted to pull her forward with various expressive gestures. "Let us proceed a little way with him," I said: "there is something so singular in his manner that it excites my curiosity. Perhaps he has found something which has been lost among the bushes, and would direct us to it."

Sophia now no longer resisted his gentle efforts to bring us forward: and the little animal relinquished his hold of her dress, and ran before us; stopping and looking back almost every moment, to observe if we followed him. Thus proceeding, he at length brought us to the eastern gate of the woods; and, springing over it, he stood on the other side, peeping through the bars, and inviting us, as it were, to join him.

Sophia had never been within this gate, and I had never met with a very agreeable reception beyond it: so that we both hesitated to advance, and thus caused very great distress to the poor dog, who again jumped over the gate, and again seized Sophia's gown.

"There is something more in this than I understand," I observed. "Shall we go on? Shall we follow him?"

"If you are not afraid, Mr. Airley, we will, if you please," replied Sophia. "They dare not hurt us, though they may be rude. Let us go forward: there seems to be a call to us."

I shall never forget the ecstasies of the little animal, when I got over the gate, and turned to help Sophia, who was following. He made several more circles, at the same time uttering a low yelp expressive of his joy; and then, when we were fairly over the five bars, he proceeded in our van as before.

We now walked along the wide straight road for a little way, till, coming nearer the house, the dog suddenly turned into an

intertangled path on the left, where we had no small difficulty in following him; for he had not calculated that it was not very easy for us, though we were not the most bulky members of the community, to pursue a low narrow path where he might march at his ease. However, by this time, the spirit of curiosity was so awake within us, that we were not to be intimidated by a few difficulties. On, therefore, the lady and the little foot-page urged their steps, till, through the trees, they discerned the walls of the house close before them; and, underneath the nearest wall, they perceived a sort of shed, or wood-house, opening towards them. From my knowledge of the premises, I could understand that this shed was situated against the wall of the offices. The dog went forward, and entering the shed, or wood-house, he there stood still, waiting our approach.

When we were arrived at the entrance of this place, he again seized Sophia's gown, and attempted to pull her forward. We paused a moment, however, and listened, but hearing no sound within, we were en-

couraged to proceed. There was a large quantity of wood, and some coals, heaped up in the wood-house: and, following the dog round a stack of wood, we saw a wide gap in the wall behind it, sufficiently large to admit a human body without stooping inconveniently. The dog entered the gap, and stood inviting us to follow, but he made no noise.

"Shall we, or shall we not, proceed, Sophia?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered. "I feel it right to pursue this adventure."

"I will go first, then," I rejoined; "or alone, if you please."

I accordingly entered the gap, and found myself in what the housewives call a back-kitchen; where was a large oven without a door, whose mouth gaped upon me like the cave of the Cyclops. Here also were some enormous boilers, covered with rust, whose ample dimensions spoke of more hospitable times. Other articles suitable to the apartment were also visible; but their present appearance indicated the most rueful negligence, slovenliness, and ruin. The

walls, which once had been whitewashed, were now blackened with mildew; and the air was dank and impregnated with the odour of soot.

A door opened out of this room into another, which I supposed to be the kitchen that had shewn itself through the broken pane when I visited Torville with Mr. Griffith. There was not, however, the most distant murmur of a human voice to be heard from within.

"I suspect that there is no one at home, Miss Beauchamp," I said. "Will you go on?"

"Yes," replied Sophia, "whatever may be the result." And so saying, she stepped through the aperture, to the infinite delight of little Snow, who now triumphantly led the way to the kitchen.

It was a wide, vaulted chamber, smoked to the very rafters, exceedingly bare of all culinary utensils, and having a grate and chimney where a giant might have roasted an ox. A few chairs, and a long oaken dresser curiously carved, were the only pieces of furniture in the room.

"It is evident that the usual inmates are not in the house," I said; "and, no doubt, the dog is aware of this. It will, however, soon appear for what purpose he has brought us here. But, in order that we may not be taken unawares, I will draw the inner bolts of this kitchen-door."

Having used this precaution, we followed the dog through the kitchen into a large hall floored with brick, from which rose a very wide and ruinous staircase, on whose balustrades were some remains of gilding. At one end of this hall, opening into the yard, was the door through which the fury had issued on my second visit to Torville; and, perceiving that it was now barred within, I imagined that Mrs. Jenny Rawson must have been in the habit, when leaving the house, of making her exit through the aperture which the dog had betrayed to us. And it suddenly occurred to me, that this being the annual fair-day at Beckington, the dame had probably repaired thither in her husband's cart.

While we were making our observations, poor Snow ran up and down several steps

of the stairs, all impatience for us to follow him. We were now too far gone to recede: so we began to ascend after him, though the planks creaked and shook beneath our feet.

Along the walls of the stairs were hung many large portraits in black frames; all of which were rendered so indistinct by the damp, that scarcely a single feature of any face could be clearly discerned. We did not, however, spend much time in looking about us: for we were not without our nervous apprehensions; and Sophia was exceedingly pale. We had, however, resolved, as the French would say, *à brusquer l'avanture;* or, to brave all dangers. And, therefore, without examining any of the chambers which presented themselves in various directions, we ascended to the second story; where the dog sprang forward to a door which was closed and bolted, and seemed as if ready to tear it down.

"O!" exclaimed Sophia: "what are we now to see?" And she trembled so excessively, that she was obliged to catch

hold of the balustrades in order to support herself.

I was scarcely less excited than the young lady: but, summoning resolution, I rushed forward, and opened the door. A wide and gloomy chamber now presented itself; in the corner of which stood a bed, overhung with tattered drapery of dark morine. Such was the noisome effluvia which proceeded from this apartment, that the idea, first of death, and then of fever, occurred to me; and I begged Sophia, who had recovered a little, and was following close behind me, to remain where she was. She did not however heed my advice, but stepped with me up to the bed. There, on lifting the tattered hangings, I discovered a figure, which seemed to be hardly human. So emaciated, so ghastly, so miserably foul and neglected was it, that I had never seen any thing like it before. An earthen pitcher containing some water stood on the frame of the bed, which was only partially covered by the bedding; and some remains of broken victuals were also placed there on a wooden platter. The

person occupying this wretched bed was a woman; and I immediately conceived that she must be the widow Torville.

Before we had crossed the room, the dog had sprung upon the bed, and the poor wretch, thus aroused, was prepared for our approach. She fixed upon us a terrified stare, and muttered some hollow sounds, of which I could make no meaning.

Both Sophia and I gave way to an exclamation of astonishment, as we looked upon her; and we asked her who she was, and what had reduced her to that dreadful condition.

For a few minutes, however, she seemed unable to speak: and then said, "Go away; go away: if they see you here they will murder you."

"Who will murder us?" I asked. "We are not afraid. But who are you? And how came you here?"

"I was once ——" she answered. "But go away—go away. They will kill me if they find you here."

"Are you Mrs. Torville?" I enquired.

"I was once," she replied.

"And how came you in this wretched condition?" I asked.

She tried to raise her head from her pillow, as if to look round the room. "Is it night?" she said. "Is it to-morrow? They will come back before to-morrow; and then they will kill me, because you have been here."

"They will not know that we have been here," I replied. "But who put you on that bed? Why do you lie there?"

"I can't get up," she answered.

"Are you tied down?" I asked.

"Pain—pain," she said; "cold and rheumatism."

"And you have lain here very long?" was my next question.

She made no answer to this. She seemed almost past reflection.

"You can read?" I asked. "Do they give you books?"

She drew her hand from under the clothes, and produced an old tattered Prayer-Book, saying, "They gave me this."

"And you read it sometimes?" I enquired.

"Yes," she replied. "It does me good. I shall die soon."

"Do you fear to die?" I asked.

"I have been a bad woman," she answered.

"But do you not know that there is a kind and all-sufficient Saviour?" I rejoined. "You have read of him in your Prayer-Book?"

She turned over the leaves of the book, and pointed to the figure of the Saviour upon the cross, saying, at the same time, "There, Sir," speaking like a little child.

"But who keeps you here?" I asked.

"Somebody," she answered, and looked round the room.

"I understand it all now, Sophia," I remarked. "We have nothing to do but to hasten away, and bring back a force sufficient to take possession of the house and person of this poor creature, before those monsters return who have made the wretched woman their prey for we know not how long. Let us not lose a moment. We may return in an hour or two. What is to be done, however, must be accomplished with-

out noise, or Rawson and his wife will not appear again; and then they may probably escape the punishment which they so justly merit. I will hasten to the Hall, and bring up the steward and two or three stout men with him. We will apply to the magistrates at Beckington for a warrant; and you shall go to Mrs. Tristram, and consult her about a woman to nurse, wash, and clothe, this miserable creature."

"No, no," said the wretched woman, who understood part of what I said. "No; they will kill me. Go away, and don't tell any body. For the whole world, don't tell any body."

"We will take care of you: don't be afraid;" I answered.

"Make haste, then," she said. "Make haste. Go away, and shut the door; but don't take my dog, my poor dog: he is my friend. But they won't let him stay here," she added. "Yet I can hide him, and then they won't know about it."

"Well, we are going," I answered; "and we will not tell. But shall I open your window first, to give you air?"

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "No, no! They will know it if you do. I must not have my window open."

"Why so?" I asked.

"Because then the people will hear me scream," she replied.

"Do you ever scream?" I asked.

"Sometimes," was her answer.

"And why must not the people hear you scream?" I enquired.

"Because then they will take me to the madhouse," she rejoined.

"And should not you like to go to the madhouse?" I said.

"No," she answered; "they would beat me worse."

"Worse!" I repeated. "Do they beat you here?"

To this she made no reply, but was urgent for us to depart.

"Here have been black doings," I said; "very, very black doings, Miss Beauchamp. But can you write?" I added, addressing the poor woman again.

"Yes," she answered; "I could once."

"But you write sometimes now?" I said.

"When Jenny makes me," she answered.

"Does she often make you?" I asked.

"I must not tell," she replied. She then became exceedingly earnest with us to depart: and, indeed, we were not sorry to escape from the tainted air of the room, which was oppressive in the extreme.

We left the little dog on the miserable woman's bed, the poor animal seeming almost to be conscious that he had done what was sufficient for the rescue of his mistress. Sophia and I were not many minutes in retreating into the wood; but we did not feel ourselves at liberty to speak, till we had again crossed the five-barred gate, and were actually beyond the bounds of Torville. We then gave utterance to our various feelings of astonishment, anger, pity, and resentment. We expatiated on the wonderful sagacity and affection of the little dog; on the horrible condition of the poor woman; and on the gloomy appearance of the mansion which we had just quitted. With what delight did we inhale the balmy open air! and how did we pity

the situation of her who had been so long excluded from its refreshing fragrance!

"And have we, poor shortsighted mortals," said I, "been bustling about this little parish for many years past, peering into every body's concerns, as we thought, and deeming ourselves so supremely wise, while a stupid peasant and his unlettered wife have been able to carry on a system of villany, which, if detailed in the public papers, would hardly be believed? What reason have we to rejoice that omniscience is an attribute of the Deity!"

Our subject supplied us with ample materials for conversation till we arrived near the church, where we parted; Sophia going to Mrs. Tristram's, to engage her assistance, while I proceeded to Mr. Griffith's rooms at the Hall. I found the steward at his desk; and he was not a little surprised by my narrative.

"Upon my word, Mr. Airley," he exclaimed, "you and the young lady have done a bold thing: but I should not wish you to try the experiment again of getting into a house like cats through a gutter. You

have, indeed, made a great discovery: but I advise you not to play a prank of this sort another time, lest you should draw the law on your back, though to be sure you did not break any locks. Well, I cannot help admiring your courage; and I cannot say but that I should have felt inclined to have turned cat, or rat too, in such good company."

"Well, Mr. Griffith," I said, "are you disposed to return with me to Torville, and to take the measures I advise?—for the poor woman must be relieved immediately."

"To be sure I am," said he, "if it were only for the pleasure of seeing the inside of the house. Do you go, Mr. Airley, to Mr. Barnaby Semple, and engage him to accompany us; and do you walk on with him by the parsonage way, and I will go up in another direction with Richard and one or two more stout fellows, and we will take possession of the house, the widow, and all;—(though, by the bye, I would rather have the house without the widow, than the widow with or without the house;)

—and then we will settle the old lady a little more comfortably. But, before we start, I will send off to the magistrates at Beckington, to save Rawson and his wife the trouble of coming back to Torville."

The steward then took pen, ink, and paper, to write the letter; and I hastened to Mr. Semple, with whom I walked up the park.

Mr. Semple and I went on slowly, and were overtaken by Mrs. Tristram, who had with her a person whom I was a little surprised to see, namely, the widow Watchum, who happened to be in Mrs. Tristram's house when Sophia called, and would insist upon it that she should also go up to Torville, to assist in any thing that was wanted to be done for the widow. Mrs. Tristram had in her hand a large bundle of clean linen, which she was taking with her for the purpose of clothing the poor creature a little comfortably, and also for the purpose of supplying the bed.

"Dear, good Sir," exclaimed Mrs. Watchum, "what a monstrous shocking business! I do hope those Rawsons will

be hanged, that I do. And to think that you and the young lady should have been the persons to find it all out! Why, Sir, I wonder at your courage. Such a little slender slip of a gentleman as you are to venture into that terrible place! I would no more go alone, Sir, or with one friend or so, into that house, than I would fail Clifton wake, and that's what I have not done these forty years, excepting once, and that was when my second husband, poor man, lay a corpse. But poor Watchum and I, that's my third husband, Mr. Airley, we were as constant at the wake as the parson himself: and, since he is dead and gone, I just goes on as if he was alive. And so I ought, you'll say, Mr. Airley."

"Well but, Mrs. Watchum," observed Mr. Barnaby Semple, "you have flown off to Clifton wake, and forgotten the poor widow at Torville. Do you mean to go into the house? or shall you be afraid?"

"What, in such good company, Sir?" asked the widow. "I would not miss going in for any money. And I am so glad I happened to come to Roxobel to-day. It was

all by good luck too: for last evening I was down at the burying of poor Madam Jones, of the Ham, in Clifton parish, and so came on to Ben Tolly's to sleep, and thought of going home to-night. But I think I shall stay now, to see how things goes on up at Torville."

Having had quite sufficient of the widow's conversation, and catching a glimpse of Mr. Griffith and his party hastening up the other side of the park, I walked rapidly forward with Mr. Barnaby Semple, and left the good women to follow at their leisure.

Mr. Griffith and I had agreed to meet on the eastern side of the Tower of Torville, near the spot where Snow had led Sophia and me aside from the straight road. Mr. Semple and myself reached the rendezvous before our allies; and we found such a large body of people collected from the neighbouring country, that if we had intended to take Torville by storm, our forces would have been amply sufficient for the undertaking.

The poets pretend that winds whisper, and that hedges tell tales; and the bar-

ber of Midas is cited as having discovered this loquacity of the winds and herbs to his cost. Some persons, indeed, profess to doubt the veracity of this anecdote of the ancient barber; and I confess that I myself was rather sceptical on the subject till I arrived at Roxobel. Since I have been here, however, I have so often detected the zephyrs in carrying reports, that I am at length constrained to acknowledge their garrulity to be unquestionable.

How was it possible, in any other way, I ask, for Ben Tolly and young Robert Taylor to have found out what was going forward at Torville, while I supposed that it was known only to myself, and to a few persons in the village? However, so it was. Notwithstanding that the dwellings of these two individuals lie in a direction exactly contrary to that of the village, I had scarcely arrived at the place of meeting, and Mr. Griffith was not yet in sight, before the miller appeared all dusty from his mill, and young Taylor blooming from his work in the fields.

"Your humble servant, Mr. Airley,"

said the miller, as he came bustling forward: "here's a fine piece of work, truly. I long for a turn with that deep one, Dick Rawson." And he added, "If you want any one to give him a dressing, I am your man, Mr. Airley;" and, so saying, he placed himself in a boxing attitude: while young Taylor, all flushed and heated with running, proposed an assault upon the doors of the house.

In the mean time, the rest of the party came up, namely, Mr. Griffith, who had dismounted from his pony at the gate, my old friend Richard from the Hall, and two young men out of the stables; together with the Widow Watchum, and Mrs. Tristram. And I may safely assert that the whole of our attendants were ready primed for any mischief we might propose; with the exception of the steward, Mrs. Tristram, and Mr. Barnaby Semple.

"We muster strong, Mr. Airley," remarked the steward; "but we must mind, and do nothing contrary to law. No housebreaking, if you please, Mr. Tolly. I have no wish to be hanged, though in such good

company. Is there no one here who could make the foolish old woman Torville understand what we are doing for her good, and get permission from her to dismiss the servants, and put her in possession of her own house? Are either of you women known to her?"

"I once was, Sir," said Mrs. Tristram; "but I don't know that she would recollect me."

"Well," he rejoined, "let us make the trial. Can you dive, my good woman?"

"Dive, Sir?" repeated Mrs. Tristram.

"Ay, dive like a duck, or creep like a cat?" asked Mr. Griffith, who, it seems, had come out in his worst suit that morning, perhaps out of compliment to the greater part of the company he expected to meet. "If you would see the widow, you must creep through some gutter, I understand. Is it not so, Mr. Airley?"

"Do give the word, Mr. Griffith," interrupted the miller, "and we will batter down some of these old doors in a trice for you."

"No housebreaking, I charge you, Tolly,"

said the steward; "but come on, Mr. Airley, lead the way; shew us the rat-hole."

I led the way, as desired; and, turning into the narrow path which had been discovered by Snow, we presently found ourselves at the entrance of the wood-house, where I pointed out the hole in the wall.

It was then agreed that Mrs. Tristram and I should go up to the widow, and procure from her, in writing, an order for the admittance of our companions; and an instrument empowering us to dismiss Rawson and his wife from her service. Mrs. Tristram had very thoughtfully provided a little phial of wine, which was filled, as she said, from the remains of a bottle that was given her during a late illness; and she proposed to administer some of this to the widow. The poor schoolmistress trembled excessively while going up the stairs, and was very much affected when she entered the room.

It seems that the widow was dozing when we entered: but on Snow jumping from her bed, and running up to us, she opened her eyes, and started, saying,

"What! are you come again? They will come back and kill you." And the poor creature looked so scared and terrified, that the expression of her countenance was hardly human. Mrs. Tristram went close up to the miserable woman, while I endeavoured to force open the rusty casements, the air of the room being almost intolerable: and the noise I made in effecting this business roused the dogs who were sleeping in the yard. The fresh air presently poured into the room, and dispelled the sickly vapours. I stood awhile at the window, leaving Mrs. Tristram to endeavour to bring herself to the recollection of the widow, and to dissipate the terrors which agitated her mind; and, when I returned to the side of the bed, I found the poor creature in a much more calm and rational state. Mrs. Tristram was holding a pencil and paper to her, and assuring her that if she would duly authorize Mr. Griffith, he would dismiss the Rawsons, and put her in possession of her own house.

There was a great deal to be said, before

we could make the poor creature believe that we had ability to deliver her from her tyrants, and before she could understand that we were exerting ourselves only for her benefit; but when these ideas were once received, and she had empowered me and Mrs. Tristram, by writing, to act for her;—(for she rather chose to trust me than Mr. Griffith;)—she passed from a state of deep dejection to one of high excitement, and was for hastening our motions, being excessively anxious to be relieved from the state of misery in which she lay.

I asked her if she could tell me where I was likely to find the keys, that we might open the doors; but she answered that she had not seen them for a long time.

"Mr. Griffith must, after all, stoop, and dive, and play the rat," I thought, "as some of his betters have done before him." And leaving Mrs. Tristram with the poor creature, I went down, and calling to the persons without, through the hole in the wall, I informed them that they might come

in; and I shewed Mr. Griffith my certificate.

When the company had arrived in the wide kitchen, Mr. Barnaby Semple proposed that a fire should be lighted immediately, and a kettle of water set on it: "for I am much mistaken," said he, "if a warm bath will not be the first thing that I shall recommend for my invalid. And," Mr. Semple added, "I wish every one present to go up with me to see the poor woman, that we may have several witnesses as to the condition in which she is said to lie."

This motion was unanimously approved, all feeling a vehement curiosity to behold the wretched creature; who, it appeared, had not been seen abroad since some of them were born. It was accordingly agreed that I should lead the way: and a goodly company we were, and the old stairs creaked and groaned beneath our weight. My reader will observe, that I take some credit to myself for the noise that we made with our heavy shoes: but I beg, that in this place he will not think of bringing for-

ward the fable of the fly on the coach-wheel, since the simile will not bear, and is, moreover, a very old one. Neither was it by our ponderous footsteps alone that we made the old walls re-echo. We were equally noisy in our animadversions on the grim portraits, the long dusty passages, the pointed door-ways, and the misty windows, which presented themselves at every turn.

I stepped forward, before the rest, in order that I might apprize the widow of the visiters which she had to expect: and I found that Mrs. Tristram had succeeded so well in soothing the poor creature, and had so confirmed her dependence upon me, that she expressed no alarm at our approach, but rather seemed pleased to find so many persons engaged in her cause.

Various were the exclamations of horror, amazement, and indignation, which proceeded from the mouths of the spectators, at beholding the miserable circumstances in which the wretched woman was placed. The miller thundered out his violent imprecations; Mr. Griffith displayed

more than usual of his occasional vulgarity; the Widow Watchum insisted, that among all the sights she had witnessed, she had never yet seen one "to come up to it;" young Taylor and Richard looked round for somebody to knock down; and Mr. Barnaby Semple assured me, that, in the course of his long practice among the poor, he had never seen equal wretchedness. The strong feelings of sympathy which were manifested on the occasion were, indeed, not at all surprising: for the bedding on which the miserable creature lay was so much rotted as to be almost falling to pieces; the sheets were foul in the extreme; the covering was bare and thin; and the poor wretch herself was utterly helpless in her lower limbs in consequence of rheumatism.

Mr. Barnaby Semple directed the women to search for a better bed and a more wholesome apartment, and to air both of them with all speed; and I suggested that the safest way would be to find out the bed in which the Rawsons slept, and to prepare that for the poor invalid, as it would, no doubt, be an improvement on the couch

already occupied. Then, leaving the females to their work, under the direction of Mr. Barnaby Semple, I led those of the company whose assistance was not required above stairs, into the kitchen, where we found the fire already blazing.

"I must stay and see the end of this," said the miller. "If the magistrates don't nab them, the Rawsons will be here in an hour or two: and I would not miss the fun of seeing their wonderment at finding the cuckoos in their nest, for all the grist that's in my mill. But, Robert," he added, turning to young Taylor, "we should be none the worse for a cold sirloin, a good brown loaf, and a black jack. It's poor work keeping guard in this old castle with empty platters and no cans. Come, my lad, you are young and strong, run off home, and, as housebreaking is the order of the day, break into your mother's pantry and your father's cellar, and bring us what you can find. Run off a few quarts of the hogshead that's going now up at the Fall. I have not tasted a better tap these dozen years."

"No going to the farm," cried the steward, "to set all the parish to talk. Richard had better go down to the buttery at the Hall, and bring up what is wanted without explaining himself to any one."

The footman was accordingly sent off on this errand; and we sat round the fireplace, waiting his return, having heaped up the wood till the very rafters of the kitchen glowed with the flame.

I was soon, however, tired of my companions: the steward having, as I before hinted, left his two best suits at home; and the miller, Tolly, being always particularly disagreeable to me. Therefore, giving a sign to young Taylor, I took him with me to explore the house. I have particular pleasure in examining old wormeaten apartments and dark chambers; and I only wish that I could bring before my readers some of the curious objects which presented themselves in the long vaulted passages which we traced, both above and below, although we were baffled in most of our attempts to open the doors of the upper chambers.

The passages to which I allude were close, damp, and dark, being lighted by casement-windows only, glazed with small triangular panes of green glass, many of which were wholly obscured with dust and cobwebs. The stonework of these windows appeared to be curiously wrought; and in one or two of the frames were panes of coloured and painted glass, representing the armorial bearings of the Torvilles.

By dint of two or three sturdy calcitrations effected by young Taylor, we procured admittance to a large hall, or dining-room, opening towards the woods in the direction of the church, but entirely embosomed in the thick dark foliage. This room had, in its time, been very splendid. It was hung with tapestry, some of which was dangling in tatters from the wall, while other portions of it, having been attached to the inner partitions, still kept their places, and exhibited certain grim figures of Saracens and knights in armour, in colours more brilliant than might have been expected. The chimney-piece of this venerable chamber was curiously carved, like some of the

old monuments which decorate the walls of our churches; and various costly old-fashioned pieces of furniture were scattered about the room.

I felt much interested in examining this chamber; but, in attempting to open the door of a closet in the wall, I pulled on my head a large fragment of the tapestry, occasioning such a noise and such a dust, that young Taylor, who, no doubt, expected that the dust would anon embody itself into the form and semblance of James Torville's ghost, took to his heels. It was more than a minute before I was able to disengage myself from the ruins, and to follow him into the passage; and his alarm being over, the youth could not refrain from laughing at my extraordinary figure, for I was more dusty than the miller himself.

"A fine specimen of valour are you, in truth, Mr. Robert," I exclaimed; for I felt myself a little testy on the occasion, I must confess. "And so, if it had been the chimney, instead of a few yards of tapestry, which had fallen upon me, I suppose that

you would have left me to make my way out as I could? I shall know how to depend upon you in future."

Robert begged my pardon, and assured me that I might rely upon his courage to face a thousand men sooner than one ghost.

"Ghost! you young fool!" said the little man of Roxobel, (for he was very angry just then, the dust having risen into his mouth and nostrils,) "what do you mean by a ghost? who ever saw a ghost?"

"I don't say that there was a ghost there, Mr. Airley, in that room, when the hanging fell," rejoined Robert; "but the dust flew about like a whirlwind, and I did not know what might come next."

"The whirlwind was in your own brains," I answered. "And, if any one's spirit was disturbed by the fall, it was yours, and not poor James Torville's. But, come," I proceeded, "rub me down a little, and help me to get rid of this dust; and then we will pursue our researches a little further."

We accordingly went up stairs; and we there found that the women had prepared the

bed which had been occupied by Mrs. Rawson, in one of the most airy apartments of the house: and, having put clean linen on it, and set the room in order, they were about to fetch Mrs. Torville down, intending first to immerse her in a warm bath, in pursuance of the orders of Mr. Barnaby Semple.

As these manœuvres were to be performed without my assistance, I returned to the kitchen, where I found the company regaling themselves with a huge piece of cold beef, and a tankard of ale. Here, also, I found an addition to the party, in the persons of two individuals properly empowered by the magistrates at Beckington to apprehend Rawson and his wife, in case they should return to Torville; for it seems that they had not been seen at the fair as it had been expected. These two men were seated at the table with the rest of the party; and were entertaining the company with stories which seemed much to their taste, respecting the various knaves' tricks which had fallen under their notice.

The steward and Mr. Tolly heard these tales with a sort of relish which did not serve to raise them in my estimation; for I think that it almost bespeaks less depravity to commit a bad action than to hear the bad actions of others spoken of with delight. The ingenuity of a knave, and his various contrivances and adventures, may excite interest in a comparatively innocent mind: but when his bad language, his false principles, and his despicable triumphs, excite a feeling of sympathy in the breast of the auditor or spectator, it augurs the existence of such relish of evil that I never could think well of any person in whom I observed such symptoms. And, on the present occasion, I felt sincerely gratified to observe, in young Taylor and Richard, unfeigned evidences of disgust at the vile stories which were related by the men in authority.

Having taken some refreshment, Mr. Barnaby Semple took me aside. "Mr. Airley," he said, "that poor wretch above stairs has been cruelly used. She is undoubtedly a very weak woman, and has al-

lowed herself to fall entirely under the influence of those vile people. It is marvellous that she has lived so long. Her lower limbs are almost wholly paralyzed; and the skin is quite worn from her back, by constantly lying on a bed which is seldom made. Indeed," added he, "the condition of her bedding and linen is horrible. But the poor creature is most thankful for all that is done for her."

"And I trust," I added, "that she is benefited by her afflictions—spiritually benefited, I mean, Mr. Semple." And I mentioned the circumstance of the little ragged Prayer-Book.

Mr. Semple is far from being without a proper sense of religion: he, however, made me no answer; but, pressing my hand, he said, that as his presence would be no longer wanted at Torville after he had seen his patient in bed, he would return home, and send up some medicines for her.

I also proposed that he should request Mrs. Semple to look out for some married cottager, who, with his wife, would come

to Torville, to keep the house, attend to the poultry, and wait on the widow, till some further arrangements could be made.

Mr. Semple then took his leave; and immediately afterwards, Mrs. Tristram, all glee and delight, came to inform me that the widow was now in her new bed. I immediately went up stairs, to see her: and I found, that, having been washed and laid in clean linen on a comparatively comfortable couch, she was now looking quite another creature. She was raised up by pillows; and Snow was lying by her. She broke out in words of rapture, such as I never expected to hear from her mouth; though there was a childishness in all that she said. She asked me again to manage every thing for her; for it seems that Mrs. Tristram and Mrs. Watchum had been telling her much about me, and confirming her confidence in me.

I promised her that she should never again suffer as she had done; and directed her gratitude into its proper channel, namely, towards her God. I also spoke of what Snow had done for her: on which she

burst into tears, and caressed the little animal, speaking to it as if it understood all that she said. She then asked if she might have some tea; adding, that she had not partaken of that beverage for a very long time. She also requested the favour of having a light in her room.

I questioned Mrs. Torville respecting the means which Jenny Rawson had adopted for the purpose of acquiring so strong an influence over her; and I gathered from the confessions which she made to me, that the dominion of the servant had been first exercised in consequence of the mistress withdrawing herself in ill humour from her neighbours, and giving way to indolence; and that the increasing infirmities of the mistress had at length confirmed the authority of the servant beyond the possibility of control. Mrs. Torville informed me, that the treatment she had received had become worse and worse every day from the time when she first yielded to Jenny's usurpation: but she could give me no notion of the interval which had transpired while she lay in the wretched room in which we

had found her. She could only recollect, that the weather had become alternately hot and cold for several long periods since she was first placed there, and that Snow was quite a puppy when he began to shew his affection for her, by lying on her bed, and keeping her company.

Mrs. Torville begged Mrs. Tristram not to leave her; and this good woman promised to remain where she was until a proper person could be found to take her place.

The dusk of the evening came on while we were conversing; but we feared to send out for candles or tea before it was quite dark, lest Rawson and his wife should encounter our messengers, and receive the alarm; for it was our plan to sit quiet, and suffer the culprits to come into the house, before we gave them any intimation of our presence. I accordingly directed Mrs. Tristram to make a fire in Mrs. Torville's chamber; and, leaving the women with her, I went down into the kitchen, where the men were still stationed. They had permitted the fire to burn

low in the grate, and were talking in an under tone.

"Which way will these people come in, think you?" asked the steward.

"Through the rat-hole, no doubt," replied the miller; "for all the house-doors are barred within."

"Then," rejoined the steward, "let us set Richard to mount guard in the wood, and give us notice if any one comes that way."

This was agreed upon, and Richard was charged to keep a vigilant watch: and, as the young man had the peculiar talent of hooting like an owl, we agreed that a note of this kind should be the watchword of the occasion. Young Taylor too was commissioned to station himself in a situation somewhat nearer to our head-quarters than the place which was occupied by our other sentinel, in order to communicate to us an instant intimation of the signal which had been agreed upon. The sentries being thus set, we gathered round the low embers, which every now and then cast a flickering light on the smoke-blackened walls of the kitchen.

It was natural that in such a place, at such an hour, and on such an occasion, our conversation should take a somewhat gloomy turn; and it would have been almost marvellous, if the ghost of James Torville had not been brought forward at such a time as a subject of discourse. One of the men who had been sent from Beckington was very much advanced in years, though still sturdy and hearty: and he seemed to be well acquainted with the family who had once inhabited this old mansion.

"I remember James Torville when I was a lad," said the old man, whom the miller called Joe Creighton. "He and I was at school together at Beckington: but he was a proud stubborn boy; and we, that is, all the rest of the lads, never could abide him. We always called him the 'Squire. However, when we were grown up, he and I were good friends; that is, we spoke when we met, and took a cup together sometimes at the Helmsley Arms, when I was backwards and forwards at Roxobel, in the way of business.

"Now, when James Torville came in

possession of these here estates, there was between him and his brother, that is, the husband that was of the widow Torville, such a deadly hatred, that, I verily believe, they desired nothing so much as each other's deaths. And I had my thoughts, and have had my thoughts—for it was a strange way in which James Torville disappeared. And it was remarkable the manner in which I saw him the last time. It was in these woods, just to the west of the house, where the woods are blackest. I was coming away from the house, where I had been taking a bit of supper with the younger Torville. It was in this very kitchen that we supped, and we took a good share of ale, for I remember it was a rare tap; yet I went out as much myself as I now am. And, just as I was coming, as I said, into the blackest part of the woods, I saw a dark figure, blacker, as it were, than the darkest shades around me, and the figure brushed by me; not that it touched me, but it moved the air, as it were, just like a fan would do. And I thought that the person, whoever it might

be, meant to affront me; so I dropped a few words, in a sort of swearing way, which was common among us then, and may be so with some of us now," added the old man, winking at the miller. "I could tell you the words, only Mr. Airley being present, I would not be so rude. But, howsomdever, the word 'hell' was one of them; on which the person, or the spirit, or whatever it was, answered, and said, 'Don't speak of that place; you may be there before you think.' And I knew the voice, it was James Torville's; and from that time to this he has never been heard of. And I have often thought that it was not him that I then met; that is, not him himself, but his spirit. And may be it was at that very time, that they were dispatching him; and he was permitted to shew himself to me, just, as it might be, at the moment of the departure of his soul. I have often thought on't, and shall never believe the contrary, unless I could see him again in his flesh and blood."

"Did the Rawsons live at Torville at that time, Mr. Creighton?" I asked.

"To be sure they did, Sir," he answered. "Rawson was a parish boy, reared by old Torville, and was, as I have heard, as very a slave as ever a poor neger on the plantations. I have seen James Torville flog him till the blood has come through his shirt and frock too."

We were here interrupted by Robert Taylor, who came to inform us that Richard had hooted; on which, we all jumped up, and ran to the places which had been concerted beforehand, wishing to see our victims fairly in the house before we pounced upon them.

I cannot say where the rest of the party went to hide themselves; but I know that I was directed to ensconce myself under a sort of dresser, or table, where the leaf, which hung down, might completely conceal me: and I was so situated that I had a full view, through a crack in the board, of all that was passing without.

I saw Jenny Rawson enter first, carrying a large basket, and she was immediately followed by her husband. I could only distinguish their figures. Jenny entered

grumbling, and her husband replied by cursing. They seemed to be carrying on some altercation, which had probably served to beguile the tedium of their walk from the place whither they were come. The woman then taking a match and candle from some well-known repository, went to the fireplace and lighted a candle, at the same time remarking on the state of the fire, and wondering how it should be so brisk. For a moment she stood in the wide chimney, with her back to the fire, holding the candle upside down for the purpose of fostering the blaze, and, at the same time, protecting it with her hand; but the next moment, turning up the light, and removing her hand, she and her husband at the same instant perceived the remainder of the repast, and the black jug on the oaken dresser, with the benches, stools, and chairs, on which we had been sitting. It was curious to observe how conscience and horror-struck these two wretches looked at the sight of these things. They spoke not a word, but became pale and ghastly as corpses. The next minute, however, they looked towards

the door by which they had entered, and were, no doubt, meditating a flight, when the miller, the two men in authority, young Taylor, and Richard, burst upon them: and an horrible scuffle ensued, attended with the yells of the woman, which reminded me more of the howlings of a wolf than of the shrieks of a human being.

At length, the criminals were overpowered; Jenny was obliged to shew us where she kept the keys; and both she and her husband were taken off, late as the hour was, to Beckington; the miller and the young men, with the two servants of the magistrates, forming the guard. And I was truly rejoiced when we were so far rid of them.

We then dismissed the Widow Watchum to inform Mr. Barnaby Semple of what had happened, and to beg him to send up the persons whom we trusted he had provided to keep Mrs. Torville's house. Mrs. Watchum was also empowered to tell the story wherever she pleased, and to procure such provisions and other requisites as might be wanted from the shop; though we found some of the articles which we

needed, as well as a purse containing some money, in the basket which Jenny Rawson had brought in with her.

Poor Mrs. Torville had, it seems, been dreadfully frightened by the shrieks of Jenny Rawson; and Mrs. Tristram had found great difficulty in convincing her that she was never after this to be annoyed by this horrible woman. Indeed, some hours were employed in composing and re-assuring her; and our efforts for this purpose were not completely effectual till she had enjoyed the comfort of some tea made in her presence, and had seen the poor cottager who had been sent by Mr. Barnaby Semple. This new inmate, whom I knew very well, is a very decent old woman; and she had most gladly undertaken to remove to Torville, with her husband and two grandchildren, and to remain in her new situation as long as was required.

Before I returned home I had a parting interview with the widow; and I promised to return in the morning, and to give such directions for the management of her concerns, as might be necessary.

She dismissed me with her prayers, and begged that, on my next visit, I would bring with me that lovely angel who had been my companion in the morning.

Thus closed this memorable day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MANY CHANGES.

I HAD hardly sat down to breakfast, on the morning subsequent to my adventures at Torville, when Eugenius entered, evidently in some displeasure.

"What is the matter now, Mr. Lovel?" I enquired.

"I am out of humour, Mr. Airley," he replied.

"So I see," was my next remark; "but not with me, I hope?"

He smiled, and answered, "No. Had you been the person to disturb me, I should not have sought you as a comforter, which I now do. But, Mr. Airley, we had a miserable day yesterday. During the former part of the excursion, Miss Fisher was all pathos and sentiment, and talked of purling

brooks, and azure skies, and cottages, and thatch, and eglantine. And Lucy, as I told her, was in one of her abstracted moods;—in India, probably, in imagination;—and, in consequence, she did not give me the least assistance in entertaining my companion. She was not even sufficiently at home to take offence, when I wanted to affront her; but was most provokingly and stupidly passive. And then, to sum up all, while we were eating cold venison pasty in a cottage, which is the acme of rural felicity in pleasant company, and the most miserable of all things in society which is disagreeable, who should come in but Mr. Nuttall, bringing some sort of note to Miss Fisher, which was, no doubt, intended to serve as a blind, or an excuse for his coming at all: and he had the impudence to sit down with us, and to talk familiarly with the young ladies."

"And you turned him out of the door, I suppose?"

"No," replied Eugenius; "I became gloriously sullen, and only answered, 'Yes,' or 'No,' when he addressed me."

"And how did Miss Lovel conduct herself?" I asked.

"Why," returned Eugenius, "she was even more provoking than Taffy himself; for she really did not seem to notice anything that passed. When the young man addressed her, she did indeed answer him with civility, but her replies were managed in such a way, that it was impossible for him to carry on a connected conversation with her, or to advance one step further towards intimacy."

"And what was there provoking in this, Mr. Lovel?" I asked.

"Why," replied Eugenius, "when he sat down, she ought to have got up."

"Perhaps she did quite as well in keeping her place," I rejoined. "But how did this charming day terminate?"

"Oddly enough," returned Eugenius. "When we arose to continue our walk, I gave my arm to Lucy, and we walked first, while Miss Fisher followed with David."

"And I suppose that you have mortally offended Miss Fisher by this behaviour," I answered.

"Perhaps I may," replied Eugenius. "But, at any rate, the wound I gave her was not very deep, for she presently became so pleased with her companion, that I heard her laughing and talking with him as if he had been the dearest friend she had on earth."

"She did this to pique you, probably, Mr. Lovel?" I remarked.

"If so, she entirely failed of her end," replied Eugenius; "for I do not care enough for her to regard any thing that she chooses to do."

"But I hope," said I, "that you and your sister enjoyed each other's society, when together?"

"We did not once speak to each other," he replied.

"Upon my word," I observed, "you must have had a most agreeable day. And in what kind of tempers did you come home?"

"I went to bed as soon as I arrived at the Hall," replied Eugenius; "but Lucy tells me that Miss Caroline gave a fine character of me to Mrs. Winifred at supper."

"Well, Eugenius," I remarked, "I hardly know what to say to all this. You all appear to be at cross purposes at Roxobel; and I believe I must leave you to adjust matters as well as you can: for it seems to be a hopeless undertaking to endeavour to set you right. Your aunt Winifred expects you to marry Miss Fisher; and you will not accept of her. The old lady also evidently wishes to form a match between Miss Lucy and David Nuttall;—a scheme as wise in the conception as it is likely to be successful in the result. You would marry Miss Beauchamp to-morrow, if you were permitted; and she will not hear of it. You desire an estate; and your sister wants to get rid of one. Mrs. Grizzy is deficient in wit; and Mrs. Winifred in common sense. Mrs. Nuttall wants good principles; and the poor doctor wants health. David Nuttall would be the better for a good horsewhipping; and a little common prudence would be a benefit to yourself. Such is the chequered nature of our affairs: and you come to me to reconcile all these inconsistencies, as if I were truly

the necromancer that I have pretended to be."

"But, Mr. Airley," returned Eugenius, "pray do not laugh at me. I am just at that age when people can least bear to be laughed at. I wish you would tell me how I ought to behave to that impudent fellow."

"What impudent fellow?" I asked.

"David Nuttall, the housekeeper's nephew," he replied.

"There is a medium, no doubt, between freedom and insolence, Eugenius," I answered: "but it sometimes requires a nice discernment to discover that medium."

"More discernment than I possess," retorted Eugenius, somewhat haughtily.

"Examine your own feelings, as they regard this young man, Mr. Lovel," I said; "and, if they are not Christian-like, seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit to correct them. Depend upon it, my dear Eugenius, that we never act awkwardly towards any human being, excepting when our feelings, as they respect that human being, are such as we

are ashamed to acknowledge, even to ourselves. Awkwardness and ungracefulness of behaviour, are always, in some degree, the effect of ignoble feelings."

"Mr. Airley," replied the amiable youth, "you have given me much upon which to meditate: and may God give me grace to act agreeably to the convictions which at this moment break in upon my mind." So saying, he rose and walked to the window; and, a moment afterwards, he returned towards me, the sunshine being in some measure restored to his fine countenance.

Eugenius and I then fell into discourse respecting what had happened the day before at Torville; and, as soon as we had breakfasted, we walked up to the old mansion.

Eugenius went up with me to the widow's apartment. We found her very comfortable, and very grateful. She again asked me, in the presence of Mr. Lovel, to take the management of her affairs; directing me where to find her papers. I have discovered that the estate is worth much more than has at any time been made

of it. There is much timber in the woods groaning for the axe; and we are going to clear part of it away, and to put the house in decent repair with the proceeds of the sale. The lands (for there are several fields belonging to the estate) are in a very neglected condition, and do not produce half what they might. I have advised the widow to let the greater part of them to the Taylors, who I know will do them justice, and to retain only enough for her two cows. We mean to take down some of the ruinous outhouses, and to repair the rest; to restore the old walled garden at the back of them; to settle the worthy cottager and his wife in the house; and to establish one of the granddaughters as the widow's maid.

It does not yet appear whether any thing can be recovered from the Rawsons, who have, no doubt, made large profits of this poor creature. Affairs, however, are in a prosperous train, and we hope to see Torville rising again from its ruins.

Eugenius and I spent the whole of the morning at Torville, and arranged many

nings: but I shall have a good deal to do efore all things are perfectly in order.

Since I wrote the foregoing, (several lays past,) strange changes have taken place at the Hall. Mrs. Grizzy has been rapidly declining, ever since her sister's leath, being no doubt a victim to that powerful sympathy which often subsists between persons who have lived together in habits of affection and uninterrupted intercourse for many years. On the very night which followed my visit with Eugenius to Torville, the old lady was suddenly seized with a paralytic affection, which for a time deprived her of speech; and, after a few hours, she was reduced to a state of perfect imbecility, from which Mr. Barnaby Semple assures me that there is no hope of her recovery.

During the interval which elapsed between her sister's death and her own attack, it seems that Mrs. Grizzy had made her will, and placed it in the hands of her solicitor, assuring him that she had no intention of changing the disposition of her affairs as therein made. The contents of

this will, however, have not been disclosed even to Mrs. Winifred; but, as the poor lady may now be designated as dead in law, they may be considered as entirely decisive as if she were actually no more.

Mrs. Winifred was considerably alarmed and affected, it seems, when she first witnessed the situation of her sister: but after a few days, finding no change, nor probability of change, in her state of mind, she astonished all of us, yes, I may say, astonished us, prepared as we might have been, by introducing David Nuttall to take his meals in the dining-room, establishing him in one of the best chambers at the Hall, and ordering the servants to treat him with the respect due to a person whom she meant to adopt as her heir.

I was walking in the park the other morning, when, seeing Eugenius and Lucy at some little distance before me, engaged in conversation, I called to them, and they immediately turned to meet me. I perceived that they were both dejected: and we had scarcely saluted each other,

when they informed me that they had been at my lodgings looking for me, having much to tell me.

"We are in trouble, Mr. Airley," said Lucy, "and want your advice: we cannot tell how to act." She then proceeded to say, that it had been the custom at the Hall, since Mrs. Judy's death, to assemble at the dinner-table when the bell rang, and not as formerly in the oak parlour: agreeably to which custom, she with her brother had repaired to the dining-room at the usual hour the day before, and there found Miss Fisher, with Mr. Aprice and Mr. Griffith; these two last persons having been invited to the first table. "Mr. Aprice and the steward," she added, "were standing in one of the windows, waiting for Mrs. Winifred, who was not yet come down."

At length, Mr. Porter opened the folding doors as usual, (for it seems he always precedes Mrs. Winifred into the dining-room,) and the old lady appeared, leaning on the arm of David Nuttall, who led her to the head of the table, and then,

passing to the next seat below Miss Lovel's usual place, he sat down without further ceremony.

"I could have smiled, offended as I was," said Miss Lucy, "at the confusion into which we were all thrown by this unexpected procedure; but, happening to look at my brother, and seeing him turn alternately pale and red, I became very angry: yet I hope that I was enabled to command myself. We sat down; and for some seconds no one spoke: and Mrs. Winifred seemed more agitated than I had ever seen her. Mr. Griffith coughed and hemmed: Mr. Porter's face was redder than ever: and Miss Fisher appeared as if she had not quite made up her mind whether she should be pleased or displeased at this addition to the party.

"At length, however, Master Taffy, (for whom I could often blush, if he were capable of blushing for himself,) burst into a laugh; and, turning to me, 'Miss Lovel,' he said, 'I told Mrs. Helmsley how she would put you all out by making me sit down to table with her. And it has just

proved as I said: and you for one, Miss, can't swallow it, I see; and as to Mr. Lovel there, he is as jealous and fiery as a game-cock.'

"What could I answer to this? I said nothing. David then addressed Mrs. Winifred and Mr. Aprice, making no further remarks on the circumstance of his own introduction to the present scene, but bringing forward and enlarging on other subjects, by which he took the entire lead in the discourse. In his various remarks, David was constantly seconded by Mr. Aprice; and they both together contrived to engross nearly the whole of the conversation: so that you may easily suppose, Mr. Airley, that the topics descanted on were, if not decidedly vulgar, yet very far removed from elegant. During his discourse, David addressed me repeatedly; but finding me grave and silent, he called upon my cousin on the opposite side of the table, asking her to pledge him in a glass of wine, and giving for a toast—'The restoration of Miss Lovel's smiles, and the continuation of Miss Fisher's.' And, as he received no

check from Caroline, he became, if possible, still more at his ease, talking and laughing, calling for wine and perry, making his jokes on Mr. Griffith, recommending a match between the steward and the widow Torville, boasting of the exploits of Ben Tolly and Black Tom, and declaring that he should never forgive Mr. Griffith, for not letting him know what was going on at Torville the night the Rawsons were taken.

"I was astonished and grieved to observe that not one of his sallies, not one of his free speeches, were reproved either by Mrs. Winifred or by Caroline. And when I left the dining-room, which I quitted as soon as possible, I went to my brother's room, and made him less able to contend with his own feelings, by weeping and sobbing for a long time in his arms.

"Yesterday evening, it rained so violently," continued Lucy, "that we could not come out to see you, Mr. Airley; and we had almost resolved, in our own minds, that we would leave the Hall for ever this very day. This morning, however, we

hanged our determination, and went to our lodgings for advice, and, finding that you had walked out, we came in search of you."

When she had finished this statement, Lucy shed a few tears, (which were all for her brother,) and then said, "Now, Mr. Airley, tell us what Eugenius ought to do."

"The case is a difficult one," I replied. "But I do not see why you, my Lucy, and my Eugenius, should make yourselves miserable. There is enough, and more than enough, of this world's good, to render you both comfortable and respectable. I have in my own mind no doubt that Mrs. Winifred has long resolved to make this David Nuttall her heir: and to this you must make up your minds as soon as possible."

"How was it, then," said Eugenius, "that she did not allow her intentions to be known years ago? Why did she not bring up this David as a gentleman? Why did she suffer me to be educated under a delusion?"

"The reason is manifest," I replied "She is not only unjust enough to have determined to disinherit her own nephew, as far as possible; but she has likewise indulged the hope of obtaining for David her sisters' estates also. And now that these sisters are out of the way;—the one being dead, and the other childish;—she ventures on a still further exposure of her plans."

"I see, and I have long seen," rejoined Eugenius, "that I am required to give up all ambitious views respecting Roxobel: and I have made it a subject of prayer, that I may submit with cheerfulness to the divine appointment. I have already felt that it is good for me to be kept low. But, Mr. Airley, if Mrs. Winifred never intended to do any thing for me, why did she oppose my marriage with Sophia?"

"For this reason," I answered: "your aunt does not relish the idea of your sinking in society, according to her notions of sinking; and she thinks that she has provided a means of preventing this, by uniting you to Miss Fisher and her rich inheritance."

"I pray that she may never be permitted to succeed in this scheme," cried Eugenius, indignantly. "Give me but my Sophia and a cottage, and the favourite, David, may have Caroline and her gold bags."

"A good idea!" exclaimed Lucy, smiling; "and I will certainly suggest it to my aunt the first opportunity. But, Mr. Airley, please to explain to me, how it happens that Mrs. Winifred is so devoted to David Nuttall?"

"That is a deep enquiry indeed, my Lucy," I answered: "but it appears to me, that your aunt is, in some way or other not to be understood by us, so entirely under the power of Mrs. Nuttall, that she dares not resist her will. Mrs. Nuttall is probably in possession of some important secret; and the mistress is bribing the servant to silence, by shewing favour to her nephew."

"I cannot understand it," said Lucy, with a deep sigh. "But, Mr. Airley, tell us what Eugenius ought to do."

"He must get ordained," I answered, "and come and help Dr. Beauchamp, en-

deavouring to be useful in his profession, and expecting no more from any of them, nor any share of what you call their dirty acres."

"I am more inclined at present," said Eugenius, "to go abroad. There is a friend of my father's, who is ambassador in a northern court: I should much like to join him there, and spend some time with him. Do you approve of this plan, Mr. Airley? I myself have only one objection to it; and that is, that I shall not like to leave my sister. Yet I should have much comfort in leaving her under your protection; and, in case she should find it impossible to remain at the Hall, there is an asylum always ready for her at the parsonage."

"To which place," observed Lucy, "you would write to me; and then you know that I could read your letters to Sophia: and you might put what you chose in a postscript; and I might forget myself, and shew the postscript to Sophia, and might describe to you the tears which, on these occasions, would certainly come into her

love's eyes; with many other advantages too various to be enumerated."

"Lucy," said Eugenius, "I wish you would be serious sometimes."

"I am sorry if I have offended you," returned Lucy, smiling: "but I know that you are of a forgiving temper. Well, write what you please: and be assured that I will not betray any thing which you may wish to conceal."

Our conversation was a long one: and it was determined, as its result, that Eugenius should write to his friend in the north, and, if he received a favourable answer, he should join him there; and that he should endeavour, in the mean time, to live as quietly as possible at the Hall, avoiding, on the one hand, all familiarity with David Nuttall, and, on the other, all occasions of dispute.

Yesterday morning, being the day after the foregoing conversation, I went to Torville, and was employed there the whole of the forenoon. When I returned home, I found a note from Mrs. Winifred, requesting my attendance at the Hall.

On my appearance, I was ushered into the old lady's dressing-room, and found her sitting in her arm-chair, and apparently in considerable agitation of mind.

As soon as I was seated, Mrs. Winifred began to explain herself; informing me that she had requested my company, in order that she might have an opportunity of expressing her hopes that I would use my influence with Eugenius to obtain a compliance with the advice which she desired to give him. She then proceeded to say, that she entertained a great regard for Eugenius, as being a sister's son, and that nothing would give her greater pleasure than to see him occupying such a situation in society as his education and good qualities deserved. Then, reverting to Miss Fisher, she spoke in high terms of her very noble fortune, her beauty, worth, accomplishments, and so on; and added, that this young lady was ready to bestow all these advantages on Mr. Lovel, could he but be persuaded to return her regard.

"Perhaps, Madam," I remarked, "Mr.

lovel is prevented, by this very circumstance, from returning the young lady's affection. Men, in this respect, are very ungrateful and difficult, and do not admire a lady the more for loving them first."

Mrs. Winifred reddened while I was speaking, and rejoined, "Mr. Airley, I treat you as a friend, and, as such, I have let you into the lady's secret. You must not take an unkind advantage of my candour."

I begged pardon if I had spoken unadvisedly; and, in order to cut the conference short, I promised to open the matter to Eugenius, and inform her of his answer.

"Open the matter, Mr. Airley!" exclaimed the old lady, firing as she spoke: "it is not needful to open the matter to the young man. I have done that already, a few hours since; and, had I proposed a marriage with my cook-maid, he could not have been more indignant."

"I am sorry for that, Madam," I said. "Miss Fisher is quite his equal; there was, therefore, no occasion for violence."

"His equal!" cried Mrs. Winifred; "his

equal certainly; and undoubtedly she is very greatly superior to the young woman on whom he has set his heart."

"Young woman, Madam!" I repeated in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, Sophia Beauchamp," said Mrs. Winifred. "Though, to do her justice, she acts well and honourably. I have had my eyes upon her, Mr. Airley, and I have found no flaw in her conduct. She is a good girl."

"And a lovely one, Mrs. Helmsley," I added. "Why not then let the young man be happy in his own choice? Why not entitle yourself to his warmest affection and his sincerest gratitude, by permitting him to enjoy his own wishes, and absolving Sophia from her promise? Eugenius does not love Miss Fisher: he will never make her happy, nor she him."

On this Mrs. Winifred became violent, and allowed me to see that old ladies can scold. She had the freedom to tell me that I did nothing but encourage the young people in their romantic follies: adding, in her heat, that no doubt I

ıould have hurried up a match between ıucy and Mr. Beauchamp if she had not revented it by sending him off to the other ide of the sea.

Here the old lady had betrayed herself, ınd said too much; but before she had ime to recover herself, or I to answer her, Mrs. Nuttall appeared from an inner door, ınd, walking up to a glass bookcase in the ıpartment, gave, as she passed, such a ook at her lady as might have frozen the torrid zone.

I was aware that one word of mine would prove enough to set this virago in a flame, and to throw her as much off her guard as her lady had been; and I was mischievous enough to determine that this little word should not be wanting. I therefore asked her how she did, (a compliment which most people paid her in the presence of her lady,) and then, answering Mrs. Winifred, I said, "Certainly, when Mr. Beauchamp went abroad, Miss Lovel would have had but humble prospects in marrying him; but, owing to the liberality of her dear departed aunt,

she is now in a situation to make herself happy, in her own way, with the amiable and truly gentlemanlike young man to whom she is attached."

"Mr. Airley," retorted Mrs. Nuttall, turning round from the bookcase, "I am astonished at you, that you should encourage Mr. and Miss Lovel in their strange and improper prepossessions. Neither I nor my lady, let me tell you, consider you as a friend of the family in so doing. If Mrs. Judy gave her estate to Miss Lovel, I am sure it was not with the view of her throwing it away in the manner you talk of; and if, in consequence of your advice, Mr. Lovel does not accept the fine offers which are now made him, I am sure he will rue the day he ever saw your face."

"Well, well, Nuttall," said Mrs. Winifred, in a soothing tone, "it seems that Mr. Airley, and you, and I, don't agree in these matters; and, perhaps, the more we talk the further off we shall be. However, you, Mr. Airley, perhaps will have the kindness to tell my nephew that he is at liberty to do as he pleases; but, unless he

chooses to oblige me in this affair of Miss Fisher, he must depend no further on my favour: and there let the matter rest. I invited Miss Fisher to Roxobel on my nephew's account. He has, from the first, been cold if not actually insolent to her; and I certainly cannot, at any rate, suffer a descendant of Sir Craddock Helmsley to be insulted under my roof."

I felt that I had been hot and imprudent: and, as it seemed to be of importance that I should not entirely lose Mrs. Winifred's good opinion, I resolved to make an effort to recover the ground which I had lost.

"Before we part, Mrs. Helmsley," I said, "permit me to be sincere with you. I love sincerity, and I doubt not that you know its value. I have spent many of my happiest years at Roxobel. I have received great kindness from you. I have been protected and trusted by you. I honour your family. I wish for good and only good for you. If I differ from you in some of your modes of thinking, yet this I promise you, that I never will give, as I never

have given, any advice to your young people, which shall have a tendency to urge them to any undutiful or rebellious conduct towards you, or to any thing like deceit. Where I cannot agree with you, as in the case of Miss Fisher, I will be silent. I cannot promise more. And, if you will still favour me with your good opinion on these terms, I am ready to serve you in any way, and on any occasion, which may present itself."

Mrs. Winifred received my acknowledgments in a very handsome manner. It was evident that she did not desire to quarrel with me; and, perhaps, indeed, my openness and candour had their weight with her, for she certainly does not want sense. And when I took my leave, she ordered Mrs. Nuttall to attend me down stairs.

Late as it was, I found Eugenius at my lodgings. He informed me that, in the former part of the day, he had had a very animated conversation with Mrs. Winifred respecting Miss Fisher; and that he considered this conversation as decisive, not only as regarded Miss Fisher, but even

vith respect to his expectations from Mrs. Winifred herself. "I have entirely given up all thoughts now," he added, "of being benefited by Mrs. Helmsley, and am only ashamed that I ever entertained any ideas of the kind. I shall now be easy. It will be necessary for me to leave Roxobel: for I must not see Caroline Fisher again. It is my plan to go, for a short time, to an old college friend, who resides near Oxford, on a curacy in a country place. From that place I will write to you, and we will concert my future plans by letter.

"I leave my lovely Roxobel," continued the young man, "the place where my Sophia resides, with a heavy heart. I leave you, and Dr. Beauchamp, with regret; and my Lucy, with many an anxious thought. You will watch over her, my dear Mr. Airley. You will observe all that passes, and write to me. I shall tell my sister that I hope soon to return; and yet it may be very long before I see you again. Lucy will talk of me to Sophia; and you, my friends, will all unite in prayer for me, as you did for our beloved Theodore."

Eugenius took leave of Lucy that ve night; and, in the early dawn of the m day, he was on his way to his friend's c tage at Ditchley, in Oxfordshire.

CHAPTER XXV.

A WINTER SCENE.

I WENT to the Hall on the morning of Eugenius's departure, and was immediately joined by Lucy. It was a cold foggy November day, and heavy mists hung upon the leafless trees of the park.

I have seldom seen Lucy so much dejected. "So, Mr. Airley," she said, "they have driven away our Eugenius; and Theodore is far off; and Sophia is broken-hearted; and poor Dr. Beauchamp is bent down with sorrow. Wolves have entered our fold, and our sheep are scattered; and sorrow hangs upon our hearts, like the mists upon the hills. The days when we were young and happy, and when the sun shone pleasantly, and violets shed their odours in the air, seem to me like dreams:

I can hardly believe that they were rea
and I feel that they never can retur
And she sat down, and began to weep.

I tried to comfort Lucy, by reminding
that the Almighty does not willingly af
or grieve the children of men, and by
calling to her recollection the truth,
those who have reason to consider th
selves as the heirs of salvation are, in
present life, in a state of preparatio
under tuition, as it were, for eternity
also assured her that I believe it to b
cessary for us to experience pain as
as pleasure, in order that we may l
how to dread and shun the evils w
without such experience we never
have known. I pointed out, too, the
sons which it is intended that we sh
acquire in the school of adversity:
first of which is, undoubtedly, patien
a hard lesson, indeed, but which con
as it were, the rudiments of every
virtue, in like manner as passion, to w
it is opposed, has in it the seeds of
enormity.

"In the present state of our affair

lear Lucy," I said, "we have nothing to do ›ut to *wait*, to *stand still*, and see what the Lord will do for us:—to be *quiet*, to be *submissive*. Yet perhaps there is not a task more difficult, more uncongenial to flesh and blood, than to preserve the soul in this state of quiescence, feeling thoroughly persuaded that the Almighty will, in his own good time, make all things work together for our good. But in this state of inaction as it regards our own affairs, we must not be dead to the feelings of others, neither must we be inactive in our attempts to serve them; and we must also be ready to act for ourselves, whenever it shall please God to point out any measure which may be innocently taken for our advantage."

As we continued to converse, Lucy became more composed; and, after a while, we moved towards our drawing-table, and, becoming presently engaged in this interesting employment, the hours wore away till the clock struck one.

In the mean time Miss Fisher had not interrupted us; and I asked Lucy if she

supposed her to be aware of Eugeni
reason for leaving Roxobel.

"She is fully aware of his indifferenc
her," answered Miss Lucy; "but she
not die of grief: for she seems to be gr
taken with the effrontery of Mr. Nuttall,
converses so incessantly with him whe
meet at dinner, that she relieves me e
ly from his attentions. I therefore earn
hope that she will not take offence
leave Roxobel."

"All this is well, as far as you are
cerned, my dear Lucy," I remarked; "
as I before said, we have nothing to d
to be quiet: all will be right in the e
have no doubt; or, I should rather sa
is right now."

Our dear Eugenius has been gone
than a week, and we have had very
sant letters from him.

There has been a tremendous fa
snow, succeeded by a hoar frost. I
beheld any thing more lovely tha
scene from my window this morning.
whole of the park within my view wa
dazzling and spotless white; and

ranch, and every spray, was decked with parkling icicles, representing branches and roves of diamonds. To a person born and red in the torrid zone, could there possibly e a more astonishing spectacle than that which I beheld this morning? No visions of Fairy Land, no gardens of Morgiana, no scenes of enchantment, could ever be conceived more gloriously beautiful than the rich landscape clad in its mantle of snow, and enriched with its wreaths and garlands of hoar frost, which burst upon my view as I opened my window. The air was perfectly calm; the disk of the sun, scattering its red rays athwart the snowy expanse, seemed to be just rolling upon the circle of the horizon; and the whole sky, unobscured by a cloud, was of that pale and misty blue which is observable only in the higher latitudes.

It has often been a question with me, whether Roxobel is more beautiful in the dead of winter, when covered with snow, or in the time of the singing of birds, when every bower is clad in eglantine. I think I should prefer to live with her when

she is in her gayer dress, though I might admire her as much in her more solemn garb.

While meditating on this scene, and thinking what a variety of beauties are continually spread before our eyes, and what little capacity the major part of the human race have for appreciating these beauties, even in the smallest degree, Mrs. Strickland came to inform me that my presence was immediately required at the Rock, as poor Mary Grosvenor had died suddenly in the night. This poor creature had long been in a languishing condition, and I was not sorry to hear that so speedy a termination was put to her troubles.

I was somewhat at a loss to know how I should get to the Rock: but Master Peter, who had come down to fetch me, undertook to be my guide; and we accordingly set out. We were both armed with strong staves; and Peter, walking before me in his grey jacket, and his catskin cap drawn over his ears, preceded me in all difficult places.

I never saw any thing more exquisitely beautiful than the woods through which

e passed in this our journey to the ock. The whole of the ground under the ees was covered with snow, which had verwhelmed all the lesser plants and the ower brushwood; but every spray, and very bough, that was visible, was thickly tudded with gems of ice, reflecting every int of the rainbow; and, in some places which were more exposed to the sun, they were passing away in watery and sparkling drops. Here and there, long vistas in the wood seemed like ranges of arches representing the aisles of a gothic edifice wrought in white marble and in frost-work; and they terminated in the bright light of the heavens, rendered more intense by the glare of the snow.

"Don't you reckon all this very fine, Mr. Peter?" I asked.

"I call the woods more beautiful," replied the hermit, "when the leaves are green, and the vetches and anemones are on the banks in all their glory. Nevertheless, the country is the place where the Almighty shews his finest works at all times: and I very much question whether

a royal palace was ever cut, and carved and gilt, and adorned, like these woods. But then, the beauty of this frost-work, like that of flowers, is perishable—here to-day and passed away to-morrow—so that while a man looks at it, it is gone; and nothing remains but bare branches and full gutters."

"True, Master Peter," I answered. "But do we not find, in these passing beauties, the picture of the life of man, and of the changing and transitory nature of all the good things of this world? This is a lesson which all natural things would teach us, were we inclined to learn it."

"It is a melancholy lesson, Sir," replied Peter.

"How so?" I enquired. "It would be a melancholy lesson, I grant, if this world were to be all in all to us. But when we find every thing around us tending to dissolution, we should be urged to seek and lay hold of that possession which will never perish. That possession, Peter, can only be found and apprehended by faith, which is the evidence of things not seen. Christ

s the object of that faith; his love is a ossession of inestimable value; and there- ore we should lay hold of it, and keep it ast;—and then, though the world shall de- art from beneath our feet, and the heavens bove our heads shall be rolled away as a scroll, yet shall we be safe, being upheld by Him who was, and is, and is to come."

"I wish, Sir," said Peter, "that you would just put on a gown and band, and step up into the pulpit next Sunday, and let that Welsh parson get across the colt that brought him here, and just jog back again to the land of toasted cheese."

"He will go back, never fear," I said, "when he has done the work that he was sent to do."

"And pray, Sir, what work may that be?" asked Peter, scornfully. "To empty the cellars at the Hall? and teach us to speak bad English?"

"To teach you to love and value Dr Beauchamp as you ought to do," was my answer. "You good people at Roxobel never loved him as he deserved, Peter."

"Don't say that we did not love him,"

replied the hermit. "I loved him, and do love him, better than all the world besides: and there are many in the parish who would die to serve him."

When we arrived at the Rock, we found the poor corpse laid out; and the pretty Ellen came to meet us, in great distress carrying little Henry in her arms. There was a woman in the house whose appearance I much disliked; neither was I pleased with the manner of the widower.

I would have persuaded Ellen to make preparations for leaving the cottage after the funeral, but she wept at the very mention of it, and begged that she might not be separated from little Henry. I accordingly promised that she should be indulged in her wishes; telling her to depend upon me for the supplies which she and her brother might require. Having then given orders for the funeral, I came away, leaving the young girl, I trust, much consoled. I must watch over this poor orphan, for she is in a perilous situation; and I may consider myself as being almost the only efficient friend that she has upon earth.

Peter attended me, on my return, as far s the head of the park, and there, meeting ith Black Tom, he consigned me to his uidance for the rest of the journey.

I had not seen much of Black Tom since is illness; and had not been able to de- ide, in my own mind, whether he had, in ny degree, mended his ways since his re- overy. I still had in keeping the money which I had taken from his box, and I asked him if he wanted it.

"No, Sir," he replied, "not at present. It will only tempt me to drink if I have it. I only wish that you had all the money which I have sent a swimming in my time. And so, Sir, I understand that we are to have Miss Lucy for our lady when she comes of age? We are all glad of it. And you, Sir, are to manage for her? Well, Sir, I hope you will try to make something better of us: for we are a sad gang, that we are, up at that end of the parish. There is never a man among us that does not deserve hanging."

"I hope you except yourself, Mr. Thomas?" I said.

"No, that I don't," he answered gravely.

"I am as big a rogue as any of them: and the worst is, I can't help it."

"How so?" I enquired.

"Why, Sir, I am in for it. I am got so beleagued with bad company, and bad habits, and such like, that I believe I should not find strength to go the right way, even if I was to see the halter and the hangman right before me in the wrong one. I see nothing that can be done for me, Sir, unless you could break up the gang of us; and so put us out of the way of harming each other like."

"Do you talk in this way to every one, Tom?" I asked.

"Do you take me for a fool, Sir?" he rejoined.

"And are you not afraid of opening your mind to me?" I added.

He laughed till he shewed his white teeth, and said, emphatically, "No. No, Mr. Airley, I do trust you; and I can trust you; and I am thankful that you are in power. I am miserably tired of my wicked life, and the wickedness I see about me. I would do better, but I can-

ot; and I should much like to put you up to
many things that I know, that you might sort
is a little: for you would not be going for to
:all us over the coals for what is past?"

"You may be assured of this, Tom," I answered, "that whatever you may say to me in confidence, shall never be turned against you."

"I know it, Sir, I know it," rejoined the wild man. "I would trust you before my own brother, that I would."

"And now, Tom," I proceeded, "I will tell you, without the help of any confessions that you might choose to make, what your temptations are. You are often tempted to drink, and, when in liquor, to swear, and use bad language; you are also in league with poachers and smugglers; and you wink at the misdemeanors of the gipsy wife and her gang."

The strange man changed colour as I spoke, in consequence, no doubt, of a suspicion that some of his companions had betrayed him: and he asked me, with some trepidation, who had informed me that he had any thing to do with smugglers.

"No one, Tom," I answered. "But when I am well acquainted with a man's character, and his temptations, I can generally give a pretty good guess at his actions, and that without being a wizard, as some have supposed me to be. But come," I proceeded, "now that you are convinced of the evil tendency of your bad life, let me prevail with you to make an effort towards amendment. Turn the brandy-casks out of your cellars; tell the smugglers, the next time they come, that they are suspected, and that you are suspected also on their account; stick to good home-brewed beer; keep your tower-door locked; read your Bible; come to church; and mind your own calling: and may God bless you, and help you on in the right way."

"And you will call on me sometimes, Mr. Airley?" he said.

"Yes," I replied, "I shall hope to call very often, and I trust that I shall find your door locked against all bad company."

While thus discoursing, a hare ran across our path. I saw it first, and hoped that it would escape the eyes of Tom; for,

having caught him in a serious mood, I wished to keep him in it a little longer. However, I was sorely disappointed: the poor creature did not escape his notice; for he was too keen a sportsman not to scent a hare so near him. And, like the cat which was changed into a fine lady, and succeeded very well in personating the character till she espied a mouse running across the floor, so Tom, at the sight of the hare, forgot his new manners, and instantly relapsed into his old ones. Pouring forth at least a dozen oaths, he grubbed a stone out of the deep snow, in less time than I took in turning to look at him, and throwing it at the hare, he followed the poor animal with steps as rapid as those of a greyhound, whooping and hallooing as if a lion was at his heels. At the same moment, from across a neighbouring thicket, sprang young Nuttall, Tolly the miller, and half a dozen other persons, provided with dogs and guns, who joined at once in the hue and cry, like so many evil spirits, or like the fiends, in the German tale, who, as the poet pretends, in the shape of hounds

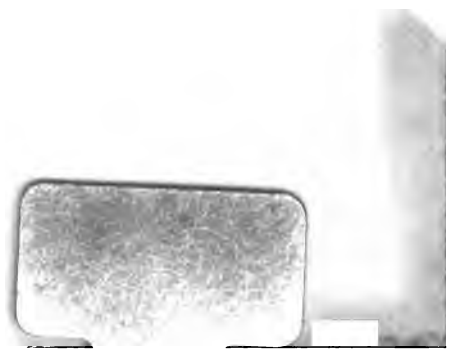
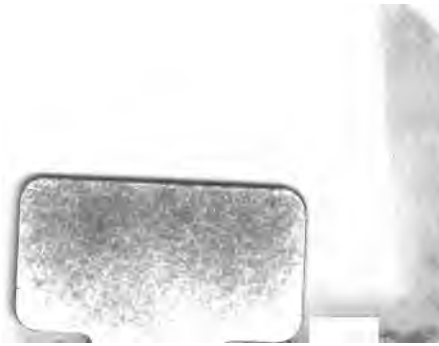
and huntsmen, with whips, and horns, and prancing steeds, pursue the spirit of some great baron, of bloody memory, from morn to eve, from eve to morn, through bog and heath, through brake and forest, over hill and dale, without stop or stay, pause or rest, whooping, shrieking, howling, and yelling.

Scarcely less hateful to me were the expressions of these men, as they rushed forward after the poor hare, across my path, down the park, and as far as the gardens of the Hall; where, to my great pleasure, they were balked of their prey, the hare having sprung over the paling of the garden: and even Taffy thought it as well not to permit his dogs to follow her there, as Mrs. Winifred would never suffer any creature to be killed under her eye.

I followed the beat which the party had made upon the snow, and coming up to them after a while, I wished them joy of their good luck, adding, that I hoped they would always meet with as excellent sport.

Taffy and the miller looked as if they would gladly have set their dogs at me

n reply to my speech, but Black Tom, I thought, seemed a little crest-fallen, and he slunk away very quietly.

Thus closed my excursion: and here I must conclude my memorandums for the present, being somewhat fatigued by the exertions of the day.

END OF VOL. II.